JIDAIGEKI COMIC SERIES
時代劇画

柳生連也武芸帖

YAGYURENYA BUGEICHO

1

時代劇シリーズ
HISTORY OF JAPAN
COMIC
SPECIAL SELECTION

とみ新蔵

SPコミックス

柳生連也武芸帖

YAGYU RENYA, LEGEND OF THE SWORD MASTER

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SHINZOU TOMI

1

FINDING TRUE PEACE WITHIN YOURSELF OPENS UP THE TRUE PATH
THE ART OF THE SWORD ENCOMPASSES ALL PARTS OF LIFE. YOU MUST REMOVE ANY SURPRISE, HATE, PITY, ANGER, COWARDICE, ARROGANCE, ANXIETY, AND GREED FROM YOUR HEART. ONLY THEN WILL YOU BECOME ONE WITH YOURSELF AND CLEAR ANY FALSE CONVICTIONS TO UNLOCK THE TRUE POWER WITHIN.

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YAGYU RENYA
LEGEND OF THE SWORD MASTER

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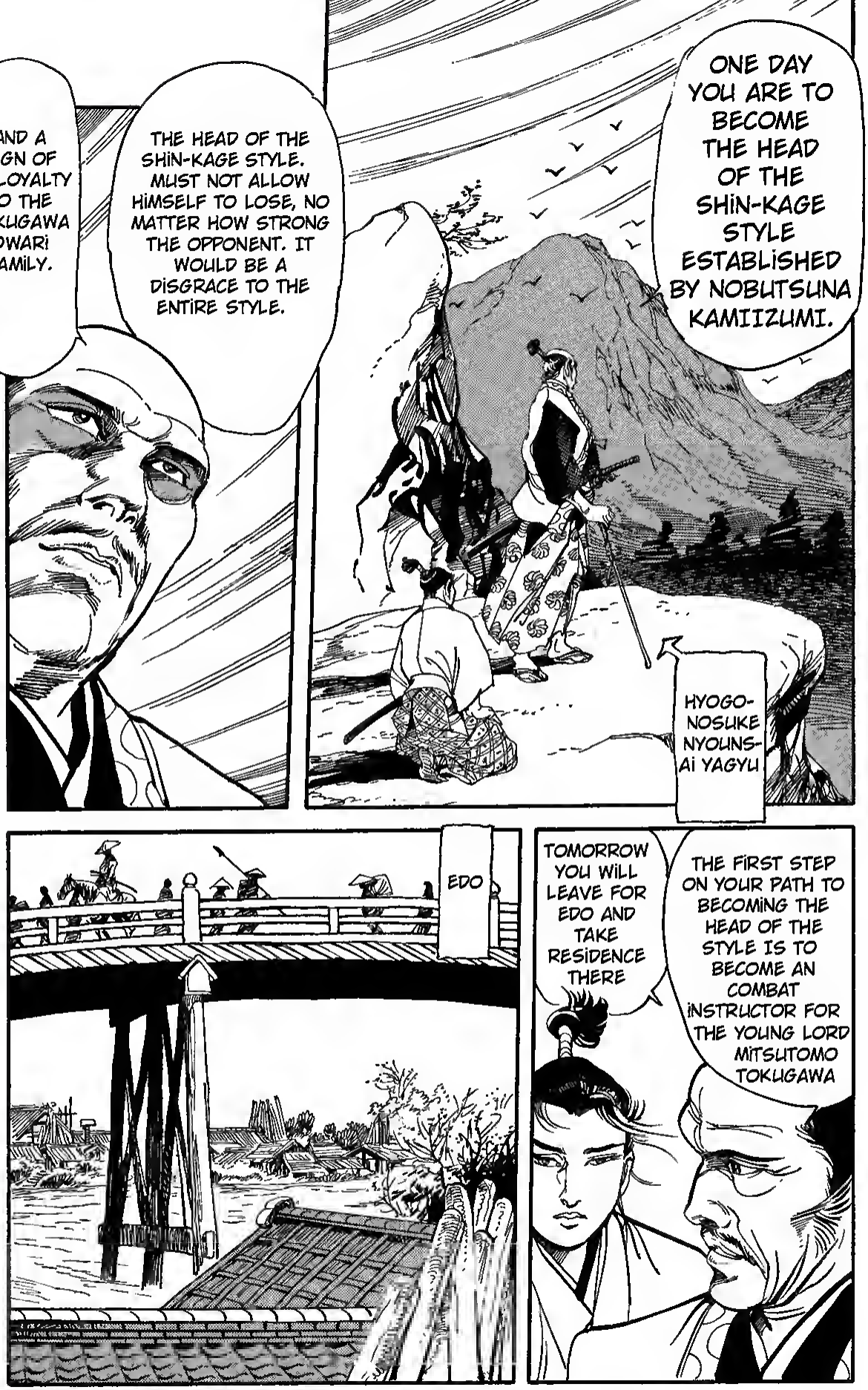
PUBLISHED IN COMIC RAN

CHAPTER 1: LIFE SAVING SWORD

【第一話】活人剣

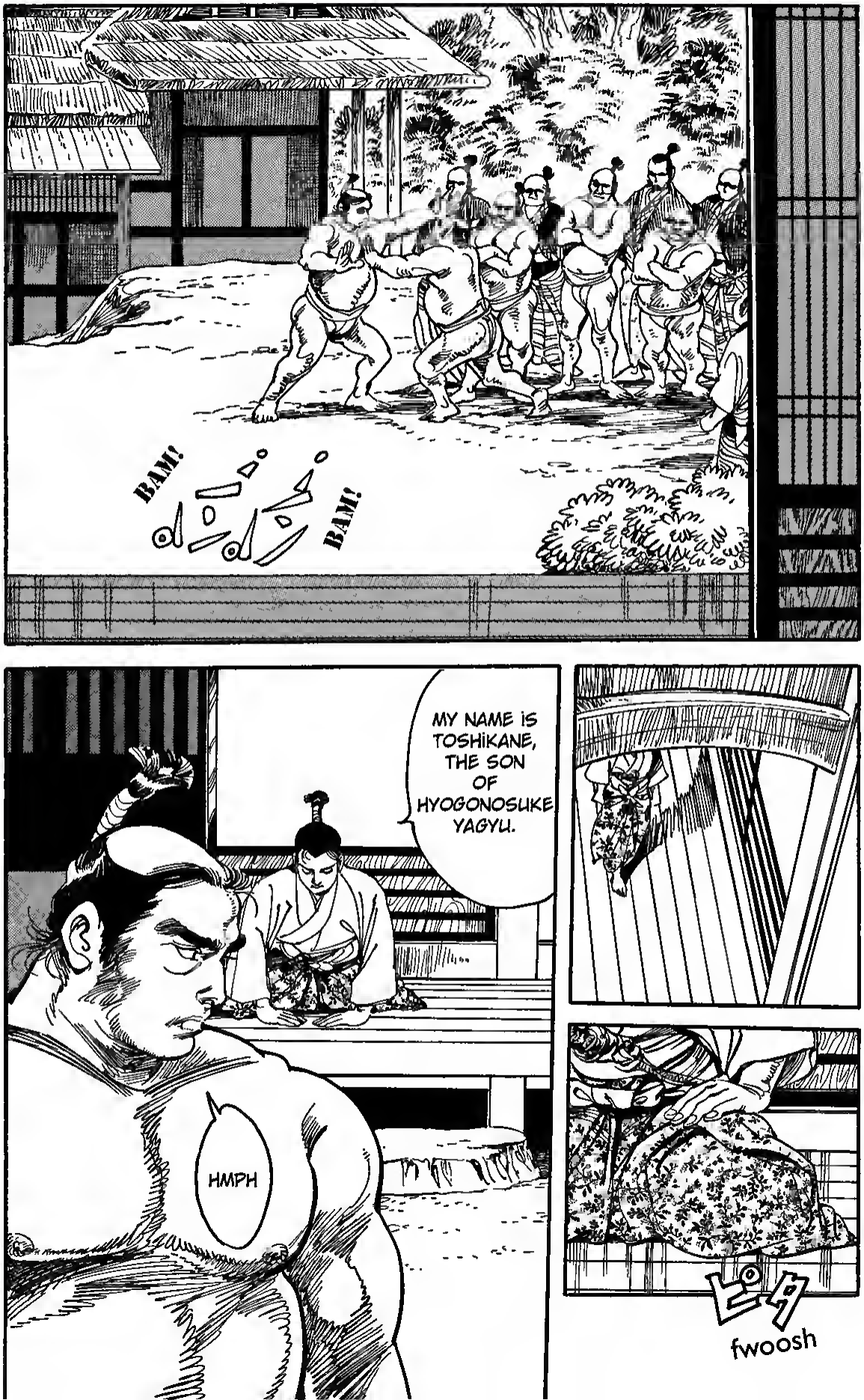
TOSHIKANE YAGYU (LATER KNOWN AS RENYASAI) LEAVES HIS HOME OF OWARI FOR EDO IN 1642
DO YOU UNDERSTAND TOSHIKANE?


ONE DAY YOU ARE TO BECOME THE HEAD OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE ESTABLISHED BY NOBUTSUNA KAMIIZUMI.
HYOGO-NOSUKE NYOUNS-AI YAGYU
THE HEAD OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE. MUST NOT ALLOW HIMSELF TO LOSE, NO MATTER HOW STRONG THE OPPONENT. IT WOULD BE A DISGRACE TO THE ENTIRE STYLE.
AND A SIGN OF DISLOYALTY TO THE TOKUGAWA OWARI FAMILY.
EDO
THE FIRST STEP ON YOUR PATH TO BECOMING THE HEAD OF THE STYLE IS TO BECOME AN COMBAT INSTRUCTOR FOR THE YOUNG LORD MITSUTOMO TOKUGAWA
TOMORROW YOU WILL LEAVE FOR EDO AND TAKE RESIDENCE THERE

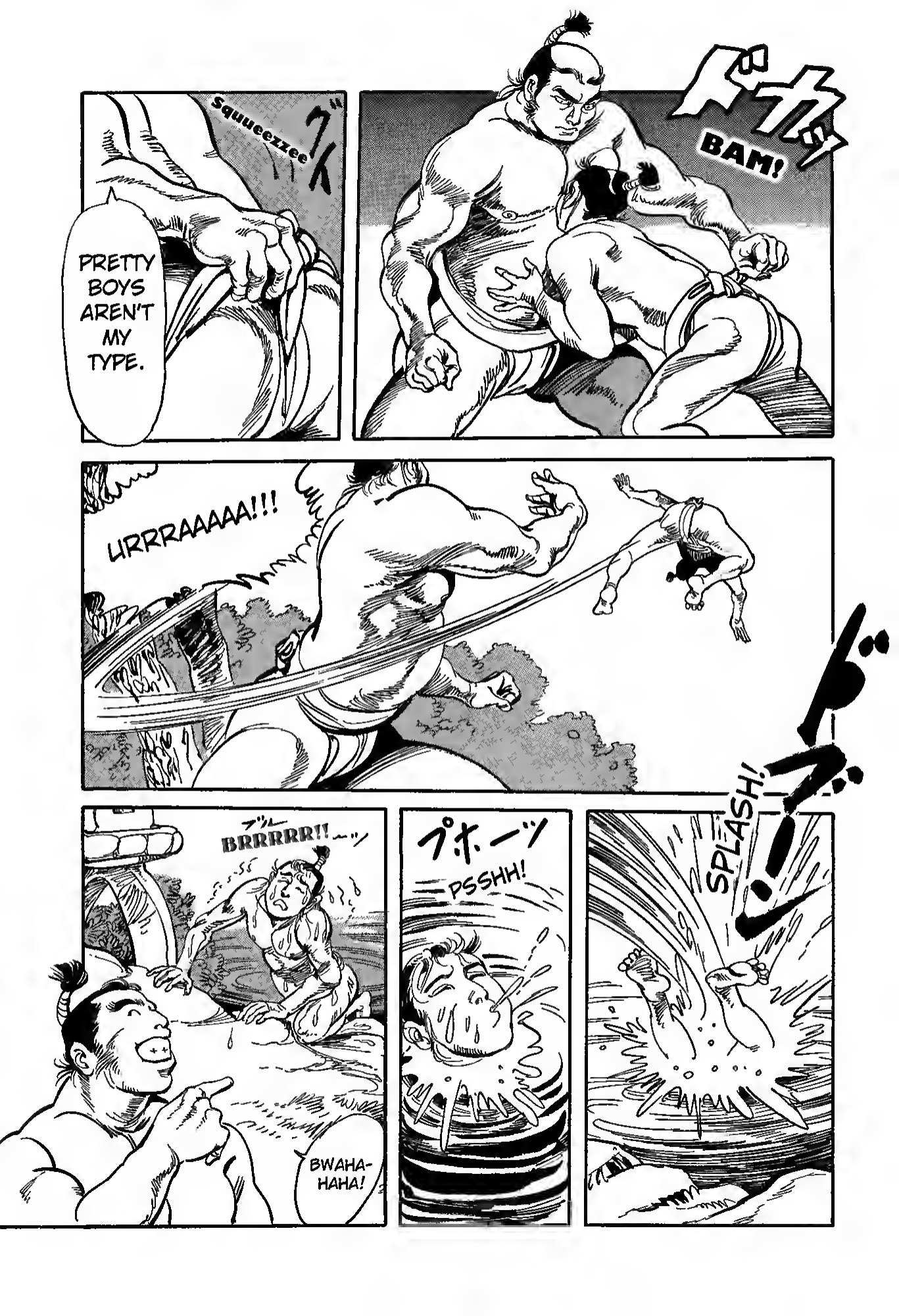
YOU HAVE GROWN INTO SUCH A FINE YOUNG MASTER!
YOUNG MASTER.
OH, WOW!
OWARI FEUDAL ESTATE
BUT RIGHT NOW EDO IS FULL OF RONIN LOOKING TO GAIN REPUTATIONS AS SWORDSMEN AND TO EARN A CHANCE TO ENTER GOVERNMENT SERVICE.
I WAS HAPPY TO HEAR YOU WERE COMING TO WORK IN EDO.
GOOD TO SEE YOU IN GOOD SPIRITS AS ALWAYS, GENPACHI.

AS LONG AS I FOLLOW OUR TEACHINGS I SHOULD BE UNBEATABLE.
BUT MY FATHER SAID THAT NO MATTER THE OPPONENT
OWARI YAGYU IS DIFFERENT TO EDO YAGYU IN THAT IT IS NOT OTOME* STYLE, SO I WAS A LITTLE WORRIED BUT...
SIGN: OWARIKAMI MANSION
HE EMPLOYS JUST ABOUT ANY WARRIOR, AND IS A FEROCIOUS YOUNG LORD.
BUT I DON'T THINK THAT THE YOUNG LORD, WHO IS THE SAME AGE AS YOU, IS INTERESTED IN LEARNING THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE.

*THE OTOMO STYLE WAS CREATED BY TACHIBANA-KAN YAGYU AND IN ORDER TO EXERT THE INFLUENCE OF HIS STYLE, HIS STUDENTS WERE PROHIBITED FROM SPARRING WITH STUDENTS FROM OTHER SCHOOLS


BAM!
BAM!
MY NAME IS TOSHIKANE, THE SON OF HYOGONOSUKE YAGYU.
HMPH
ヒョロ
fwoosh

THUD!
ドカン!
ALRIGHT! ONCE MORE!
HERE I COME!
WHAT ARE YOU JUST SITTING THERE FOR! UNDRESS AND GET OVER HERE!
...
RIGHT?
YOUR NAME WAS TOSHIKANE ...
Whoosh!
POW!
COME ON, BRING IT ON!


Squeezzee
PRETTY BOYS AREN'T MY TYPE.
BAM!
URRRAAAAA!!!
SPLASH!
PSSHH!
BRRRRR!!
BWAHA-HAHA!

...AND NOT MARTIAL ARTS.
WHAT I HAVE DONE IS JUST SUMO...
WHAT WAS THAT? YOU THINK YOU CAN BECOME MY MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTOR AFTER THAT KIND OF PERFORMANCE?
WHAT!?
YOU ARE MINE!
THEN LET ME SEE THESE MARTIAL ARTS YOU BRAG ABOUT!
FWIP
AUGH!
POW!

THUD!
GRRRR!
HMPH...SEEMS YOU HAVE SOME FIGHT IN YOU...
HOW ABOUT THIS!

STOMP!
BAM!
SHWP!
FWIP!
UGH! DAMNIT...!

REALLY MY STRONG POINT!
WELL ANYWAY, SUMO ISN'T
ビリ THROB THROB ヒリ〜〜
ALRIGHT RAITAKE!
GET OUR HERE RAITAKE!
SHOW THIS LITTLE PUNK ...
WHAT SUMO REALLY IS!

GWOOOOH!!!
ヤ
オン
ドドド
BOOM! BOOM!
POW!
ZAP!

BAM!
ACK!
NGH ...!
...
YOU WON'T SEE ANY NAKED SAMURI ON THE BATTLEFIELD.
SUMO IS PERFECTLY FINE FOR BUILDING UP YOUR STRENGTH ....
BUT...

GIVE IT A REST!
ONE MORE FIGHT!
DON'T YOU DARE INSULT SUMO ...!
...
HEY ...
I DON'T LIKE YOUR TONE VERY MUCH KID.
YOU NEED TO REALIZE THAT IS ONE OF SUMO'S GOOD POINTS.
HMM!
YOU TRULY ARE POWERFUL. BUT EVEN YOUR STRENGTH IS INADEQUATE TO KILL A PERSON WITH YOUR BARE HANDS.

TOSHIKANE! THIS MAN BROKE TWO RUFFIANS' NECKS WITH JUST A KICK...
AND HAS KILLED A BULL WITH HIS BARE FISTS! HE IS A STEELED WARRIOR!
I DISAGREE, MY LORD.
LORD, I BELIEVE I HEARD HIM SAY IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO KILL A MAN WITH ONE'S BARE HANDS.
WELL SAID!
CLAP!
I AM EMON TOUDOU, AN INSTRUCTOR OF SEKIGUCHI JUJITSU. I LEARNED MY TECHINIQUES FROM A CHINESE MASTER IN NAGASAKI.
TRY YOUR LUCK AGAINST HIM THIS TIME!

LET'S GO!
SHHHHP
FSSH!
FSSH!
SHWP!
FWOOSH!

Shuuuuu!
SHUP!
Fwwoooosh!
WOOF!

GRIP!
PAH!
HIYAAA!!
GRAB
WHOOOSH!

WHAM!
TUMBLE!
BAM!
PAT PAT
IF YOU WANT TO LIVE TAKE BACK WHAT YOU SAID!
!?
SINCE ANCIENT TIMES NO SAMURAI HAS WENT TO THE BATTLE-FIELD UNARMED.
HAVE A LOOK AT THE BACK OF YOUR NECK.

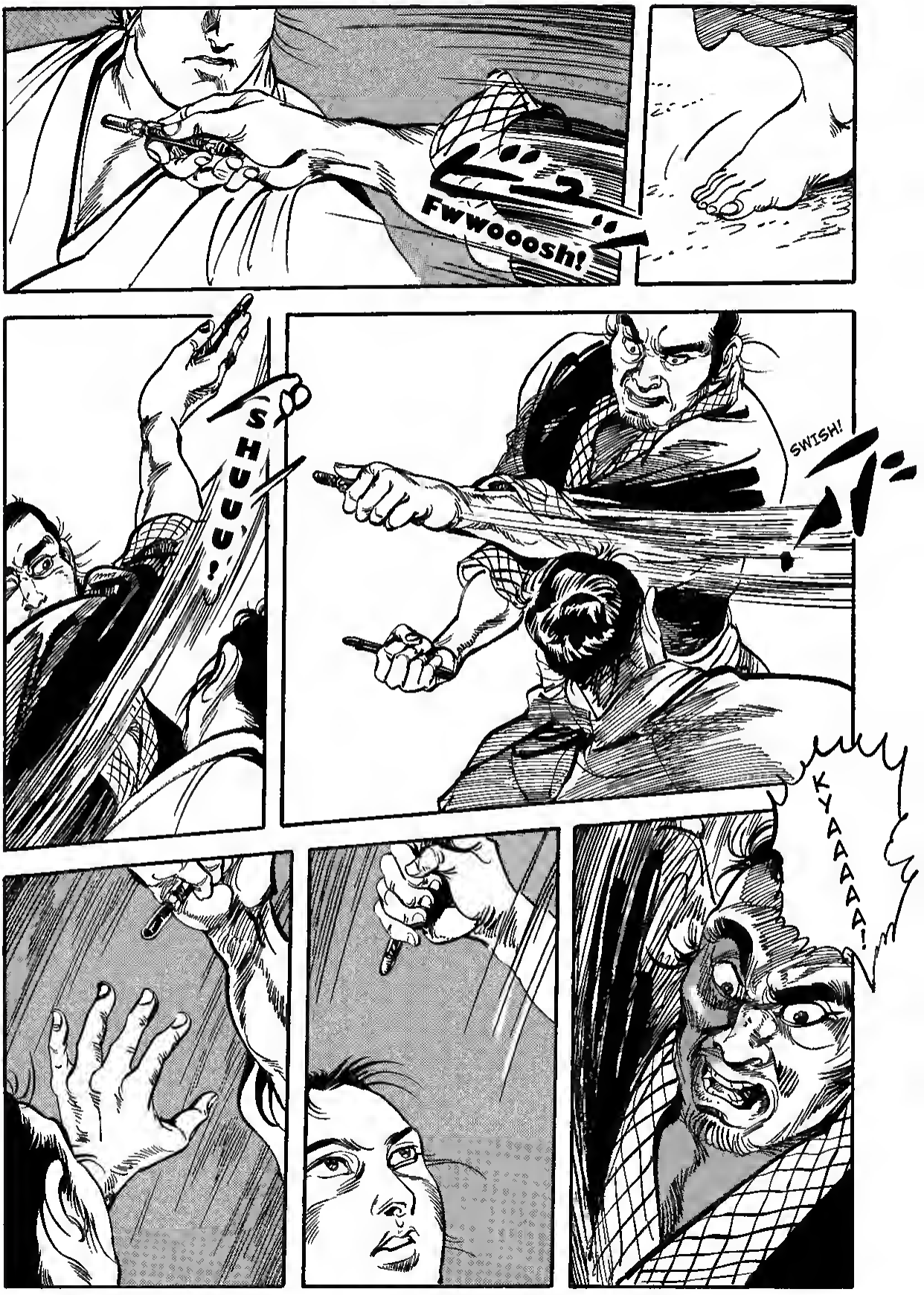
WAIT! THERE'S A MARK ACROSS THE BACK OF YOUR NECK!
YOU... WHY DON'T YOU SHOW US EXACTLY WHAT YOU ARE HIDING!?
I HAVE NO TOLERANCE FOR SUCH COWARDS!
SINCE ANCIENT TIMES THE ONLY PEOPLE NOT ALLOWED TO CARRY A SUNTETSU WERE PRISONERS OR CRIMINALS
CARRYING ONE IS A SIGN OF BEING A SAMURAI.
W.. W.. WHY... YOU..

THE WORDS OF SIR YAGYU ARE QUITE JUSTIFIED
THERE EXISTS NO ERROR IN HIS STATEMENT
LORD!
YET I AM A SAMURAI AS WELL...
AND I'M AFRAID I CAN'T JUST LET THINGS END LIKE THIS
SHWP!
KLAK!

SHYAK
CLICK
A SUNTETSU...
HIIIIYYA!
SWEEE
LISTEN CAREFULLY, TOSHIKANE .....

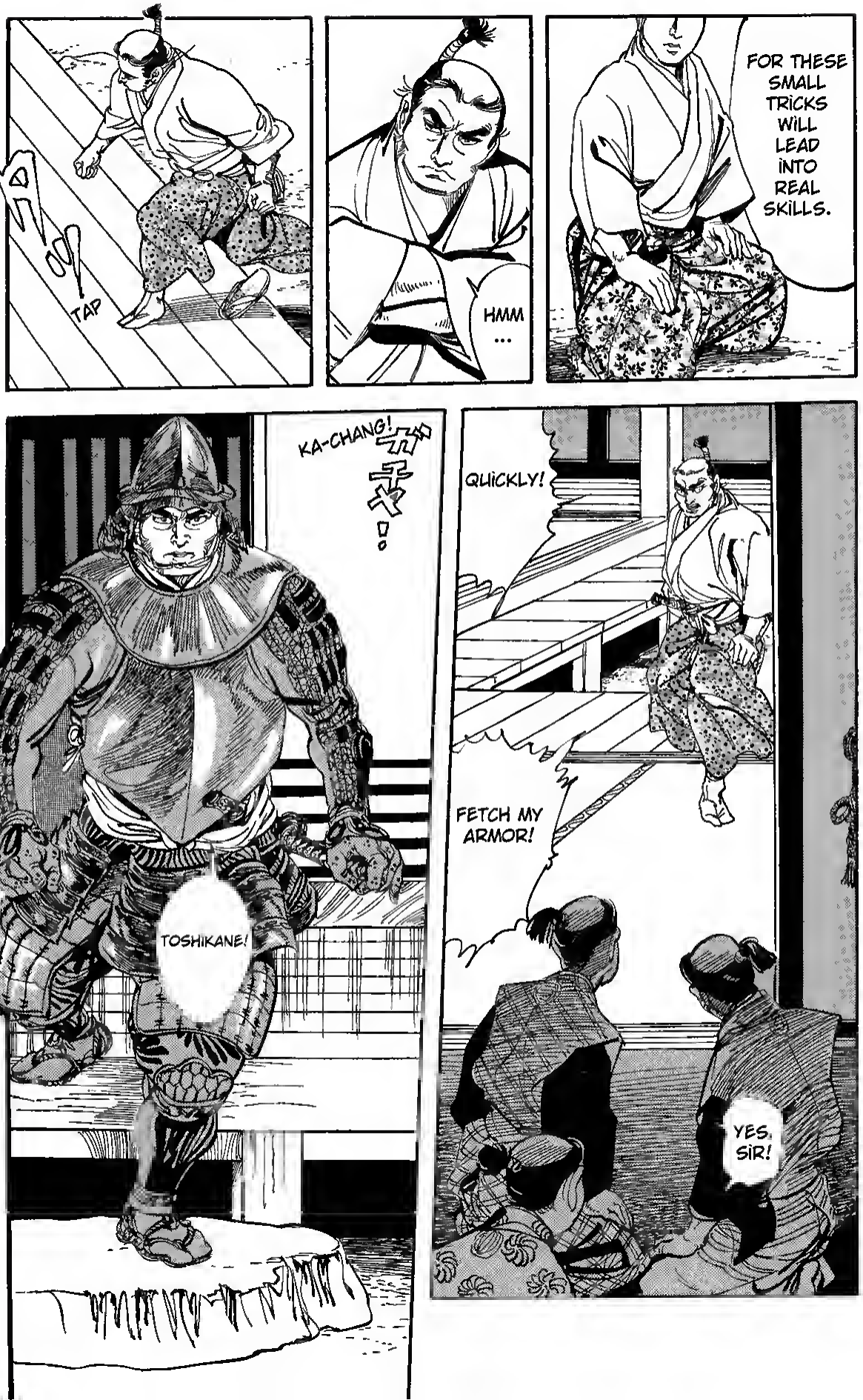
TAKE THE SUNTETSU, FOR INSTANCE... A WEAPON SO SMALL IT CAN BE CONCEALED IN THE PALM OF ONE'S HAND...
Twirl with this!
WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT KINDS OF WEAPONS THEY MAY CARRY, OR WHAT KILLING TECHNIQUES THEY MAY USE.
WE ARE STILL NOT FAR FROM THE END OF THE FEUDAL WARS. FOR SAMURAI AND NINJA ALIKE...
WHILE PLUNGING IT INTO THE CHEST OF THE OPPONENT LEAVES A GAPING CAVITY...
AND ONE CAN SHATTER BONES...
A QUICK SLAP TO THE BACK THE HAND..
BUT...
WITH A THRUST TO THE SKULL RESULTING IN INSTANT DEATH

EXPLOITING THIS IS THE KEY TO MARTIAL ARTS!
EVEN THE FINEST...
OF WEAPONS...
HAS A WEAKNESS ...
BARE HANDED !?
SHWP!
THE DESTRUCTIVE FORCE CAN BE SUPPRESSED WITH THE PALM OF THE HAND...
WITHIN FIRMNESS LIES SOFTNESS...
YOU...
SHUP!
SHWP!


Fwwooosh!
SHUUU...
SWISH!
KYAAAAAA!

"TWIST!"
"GRAB!"
WHOOSH!
HE GOT MY MIDDLE FINGER!
SHWP!
WHAM!

JUJITSU ...
SHUP!
DO NOT WORRY. YOUR FINGER IS NOT BROKEN.
HOW'S THAT?
I... SURRENDER
HMPH
.....
THEY ARE JUST MERE TRICKS ...
THERE'S SOMETHING RATHER UNSETTLING ABOUT YOUR ABILITY, TOSHIKANE...
...IS OBVIOUSLY NECESSARY FOR THE WORK OF A SAMURAI. IF I HAVE THE CHANCE, IT WOULD BE AN HONOR TO LEARN FROM YOU.


TAP
HMM ...
FOR THESE SMALL TRICKS WILL LEAD INTO REAL SKILLS.
KA-CHANG!
TOSHIKANE!
QUICKLY!
FETCH MY ARMOR!
YES, SIR!

THAT MILD TRICKERY...
MY EXPERTISE LIES IN THE BATTLEFIELD SWORD TECHNIQUES LEARNT FROM THOSE WHO HAVE SURVIVED ACTUAL COMBAT.
I ACCEPT YOUR CHALLENGE
DO YOU THINK IT WILL WORK AGAINST ME NOW!?

I BELIEVE THIS WILL DO
THEE WHO DRAWS A BLADE UPON ONE'S MASTER IS SURELY NOT A TRUE SAMURAI
DRAWING YOUR SWORD WOULD BE ADVISABLE, SCOUNDREL
GYAAAAA!
AN OPENING!
STOPS JUST BEFORE HITTING

BASTARD!
UGH!
SHOULD ONE BE SEVERED UNDER THE ARM...
THE ENTIRE BODY IS THEN OPEN TO WHATEVER ATTACK THE OPPONENT MIGHT FEEL APPROPRIATE
ARGHH!
I'LL TAKE THAT RIGHT FINGER THERE!
PAH!
THIS CAN'T ...

A CLEAR SHOT AT THE LEG...
KEEP THIS UP AND YOUR INNER THIGH WILL BE MINE AS WELL...
FWOOSH!
*A MAJOR ARTERY RUNS THROUGH THE BASE OF THE THIGH, MAKING IT IDEAL FOR DEALING A FATAL BLOW
NO CLEAN VICTORY IS CAN BE OBTAINED WITH A SINGLE SWORD USING SUCH VILE TACTICS!
AS I SAID! YOU'VE NO MORE THAN TRICKS!
CRASH!
RRRAAGH!
HOW DID HE SEE THROUGH MY ATTACKS SO EASILY ..?
IF THE GOAL OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE IS MERELY NOT TO LOSE...

THAT'S CORRECT, IS IT NOT?!
HEY!
B...BUT... YOU SHOULD TRY TO LAND A FATAL BLOW RIGHT FROM THE START!
THE TRUE ESSENCE OF THE ART IS FOUND IN OBTAINING THE INITIAL STRIKE UPON ONE'S OPPONENT.
BLINDLY AND RECKLESSLY AIMING TO TAKE ONE'S LIFE SHOULD NEVER BE THE AIM!
MERELY ROBBING THE OPPONENT OF HIS OWN ABILITY TO TAKE ANOTHERS LIFE WILL SUFFICE.
IN OTHER WORDS...
THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE'S LIFE SAVING SWORD!

...IS THE ESSENCE OF THE LIFE SAVING SWORD?
SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT NOT HAVING TO KILL WITH THE FIRST STRIKE ...
INDEED
EVENTUALLY, MITSUTOMO TOKUGAWA BECAME HEAD OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE AS RENYASAI'S SUCCESSOR, AND LATER BECAME A RENOWNED SWORDSMAN.
YOUR WORDS MAY PROVE TO BE OF SOME VALUE WHEN I COME TO POWER.
I AM THE ONE DESTINED TO INHERIT ALL THE RICHES CONTAINED IN OWARI.
CHIRPING OF THE JAPANESE NIGHTINGALE
THE TWO EIGHTEEN YEAR-OLDS, MITSUTOMO AND TOSHIKANE, WERE IN THE SPRING OF THEIR YOUTH...

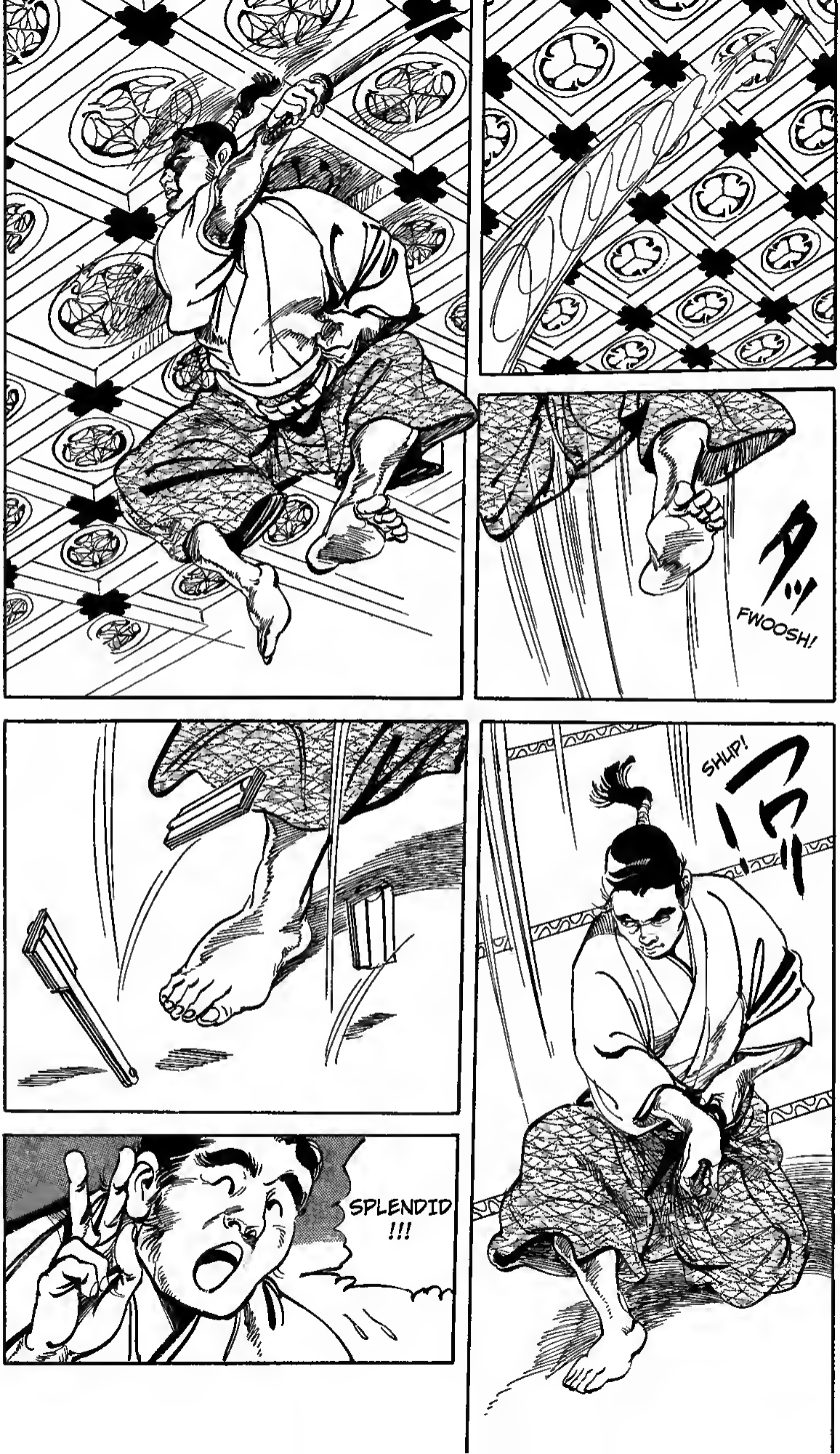
CHAPTER 1 - FIN

CHAPTER 2: SWORD OF CRUSHING EVIL

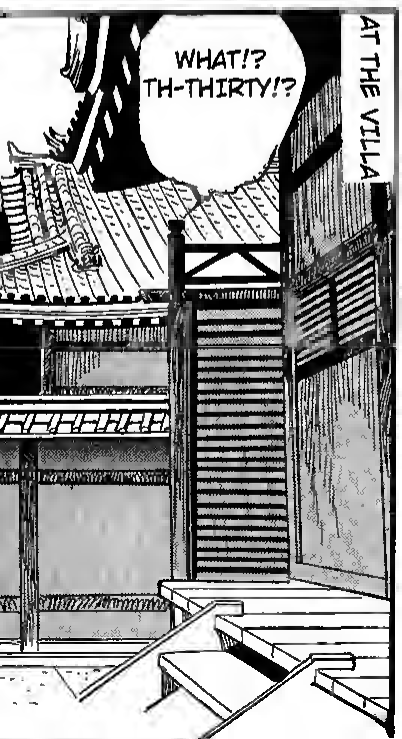
[第二話]
破邪の剣

I WOULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED ANY LESS...
MITSU-TOMO, DON'T YOU THINK HE'S AMAZING? THAT TOSHIKANE, THE REPRE-SENTATIVE OF HYOGO YAGYU FROM OUR HOMETOWN...
BUT YOU KNOW, FATHER, THE WORLD IS A BIG PLACE.
YOU'RE RIGHT...
YES!
BRING KUSANAGI IN!
CLAP CLAP!

GREAT.
I, TOMA KUSANAGI HAVE ARRIVED.
WE GET ALONG WELL WITH EACH OTHER.
A FEW YEARS AGO, THAT PERSON OPENED A DOJO IN KANDA, AND IN NO TIME AT ALL, BECAME WELL KNOWN AMONG THE SAMURAI.
TOMA, SHOW US HOW YOU CUT THIS UP.
...YOU ARE SET TO BECOME THE FIFTH HEAD OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE. IT IS AN HONOR TO MEET YOU.
STARTING FROM NOBU-TSUNA KAMI-IZUMI ....
MY NAME IS TOSHI-KANE YAGYU.


FWOOSH!
SHUP!
SPLENDID !!!

THANK YOU SO MUCH.
TAKE THIS, TOMA.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? IT LOOKED PRETTY GOOD!
FORGIVE ME.
FORGIVE ME FOR SHOWING SUCH A LOUSY MOVE!
HE MADE HIM FIGHT WITH 20 OF THE STRONGEST WARRIORS IN MY GRANDFATHER'S FAMILY.
WHEN MY GRANDFATHER GONGEN* CHOSE YOUR FATHER'S COUSIN TAJIMANOKAMI YAGYU AS A SWORD MASTER,



HOWEVER, YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT TOMA OVER HERE WILL BE ONE OF THE 30.
I WILL HAVE YOU FIGHT 30 OF MY STRONGEST MEN, AND IF YOU CAN BEAT THEM ALL, YOU TOO CAN BECOME A TEACHER OF THE SWORD.

* GONGEN: IEYASU WAS CALLED DAIGONGEN TOSHO IN THE EDO PERIOD

LEAVE THAT TO ME!
I WOULD LIKE TO CHECK OUT THE EDO STREETS TOMORROW IF POSSIBLE ...
WELL, THERE ARE TEN MORE DAYS UNTIL THE BIG FIGHT.
YOU SURE CHOSE A HARD LIFE FOR YOURSELF.
AND TO THINK IT'S ONLY YOUR FIFTH DAY IN EDO...
IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MANY OF THEM THERE ARE. ALL I HAVE TO DO IS JUST FOLLOW THE TEACHINGS OF THE SHINKAGE STYLE, LIKE MY FATHER TAUGHT ME.
CHAPTER
OVER THERE IS THE FAMOUS YOSHIWARA RED-LIGHT DISTRICT!
AFTER ALL, EDO IS SO BIG AND LIVELY!

HEY GUYS, WHY DON'T YOU COME IN?
HAHAHA ... TODAY WE ARE JUST LOOKING.
DON'T BE STINGY !
SO THIS IS THAT TOSHIKANE YAGYU FROM OWARI ...
WHAT A NICE GUY!
WOW !
HEHEHE ... COME AGAIN, OK?
ONE OF MY GIRLS CHOSE YOU!
HEY, YOU! YOUNG MASTER!

YOUNG MASTER, WANNA CHECK IT OUT?
SHE WILL GIVE A SPECIAL DISCOUNT, JUST FOR YOU!
WELL, I COME HERE FROM TIME TO TIME, TOO.
THEN, YOUNG MASTER, WHY DON'T WE HAVE A DRINK IN THAT IZAKAYA* AND YOU CAN TELL ME ALL ABOUT MASTER HYOGONOSUKE AND YOUR HOMETOWN?
IT'S RARE TO GET A DISCOUNT, YOU KNOW ...

*IZAKAYA: A DRINKING ESTABLISHMENT IN JAPAN, WHICH ALSO SERVES FOOD AS A RESTAURANT

AS I WAS NO GOOD WITH SWORDS, MASTER TOLD ME TO TAKE CARE OF YOU.
AAH, IT HAS GOTTEN REALLY LATE.
SO WHEN I HEARD THAT YOU WOULD BE COMING OVER, I WAS GLAD!
BAM!
!
TUMBLE!
WELL ... IN FACT, TROUBLESOME INCIDENTS HAVE BEEN HAPPENING FREQUENTLY FOR THE LAST HALF A YEAR ...
... THERE ARE NO PEOPLE OUT AT ALL COMPARED TO DURING DAYTIME ...

SLASH!
FOOTSTEPS
FWOOSH!
SWISH!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING !?
GLARE

AS PEOPLE DIE THEIR SOULS QUICKLY RISE TO HEAVEN ...
HOWEVER, THE SOULS OF THOSE KILLED TRY TO TAKE...
...THE SOUL OF THEIR KILLER WITH THEM...
AND CURSE HIM AS HE DESERVES ...
..WHICH MAKES MY SOUL FEEL LIGHTER.
SLUMP
IF MY SOUL BECOMES LIGHTER, MY BODY BECOMES LIGHTER TOO.
IF MY BODY BECOMES LIGHTER, MY SOWRD TECHNIQUES WILL IMPROVE... IT'S ALL FOR MY SWORD ...
...TO BECOME THE GREATEST SWORD IN THE WORLD!

HEH HEH... NOW, YOU WILL HELP TO MAKE MY SOUL LIGHTER!
WHAT A FANATIC!
オリヤー
URRAA!!
LANTERNS: OFFICIAL BUSINESS
御用
SSSHHHING!!!
YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!
LANTERN: OFFICIAL BUSINESS
御用

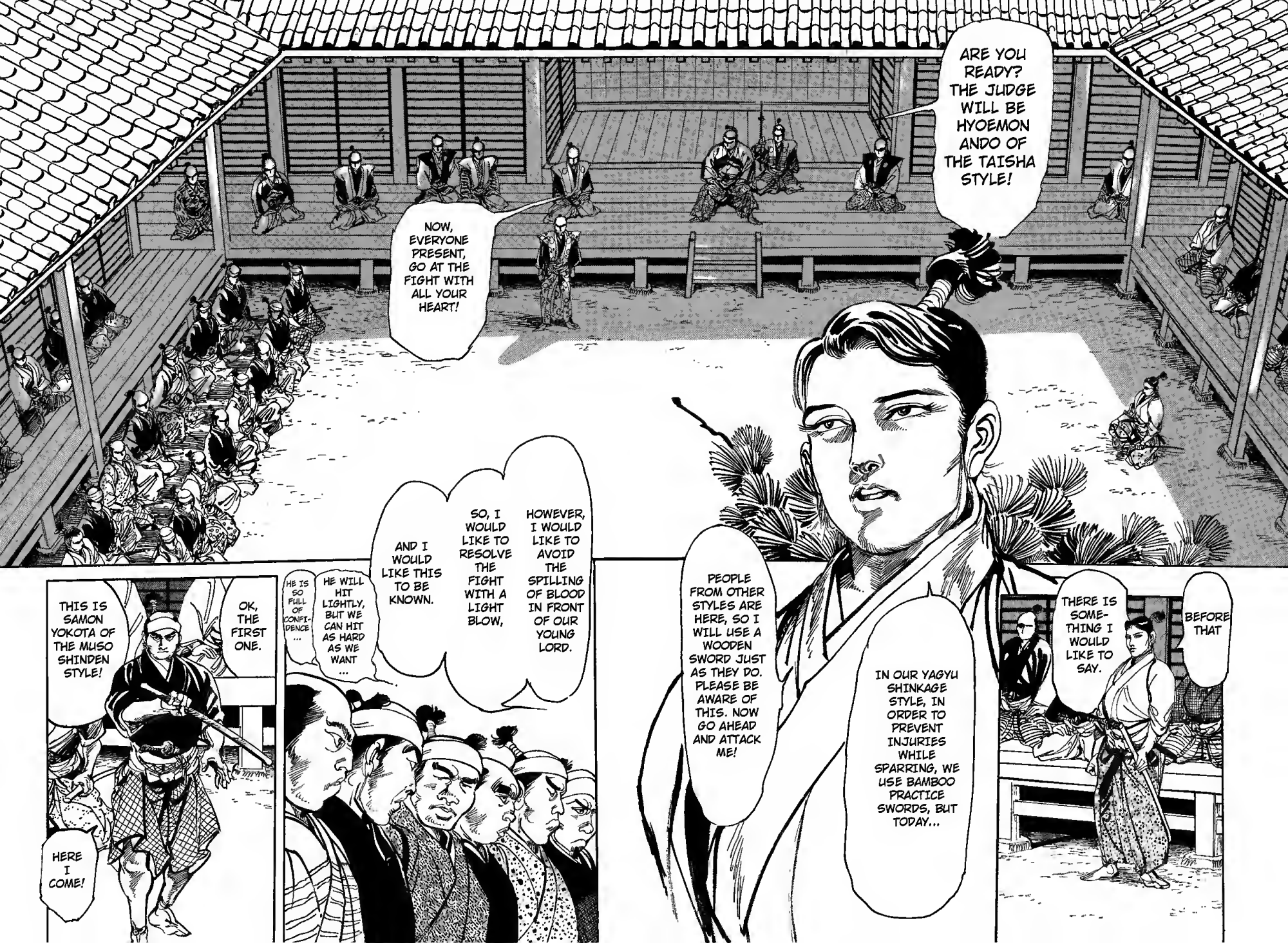
MANY FOOTSTEPS
I HOPE WE MEET AGAIN ...
YOU ESCAPED DEATH.
OWARI CLAN RESIDENCE
尾張藩中屋敷

YOUNG MASTER
ALL OF YOUR 30 OPPONENTS FOR THE FIGHT IN FIVE DAYS HAVE BEEN DETERMINED!
YEP, NAGURA IS SHOWING THEM TO ME RIGHT NOW ON PAPER.
THE STRONGEST ONES SEEM TO BE IWASE, NAKAMURA AND THE TOWN DOJO MASTER KUSANAGI ...
IWASE IS A FAMOUS MASTER OF THE KAN STYLE OF SPEAR FIGHTING.
NAKAMURA IS A RONIN, BUT HE IS FROM THE NOW UNKNOWN JUBEI YAGYU HOUSE ... HE IS STILL DEEPLY CONNECTED WITH THE EDO YAGYU*,
SO WHEN HE LEARNT ABOUT THE CHANCE TO TEST YOUR SKILLS, HE QUICKLY JUMPED AT THE OPPORTUNITY.
SO HE IS ONE OF THE EDO YAGYU ...

*THE EDO YAGYU'S TAJIMANOKAMI YAGYU WAS 72 AT THAT TIME. HIS OLDEST SON JUBEI WAS 37 YEARS OLD. THEN, THE SECOND SON MUNEFUYU, WHO WAS EVENTUALLY TO FIGHT TOSHIKANE (RENYA) IN FRONT OF THE THIRD TOKUGAWA SHOGUN IEMITSU, WAS 31.

BUT ... IF YOU LOSE TO EVEN ONE OF THEM,
ERHM, YOUNG TEACHER, YOUR SWORDS-MANSHIP SKILLS.
THEY MIGHT BE YAGYU AS WELL, BUT AFTER ALL WE, THE OWARI YAGYU, ARE THE MAIN BRANCH. SO THE EDO YAGYU MUST BE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR ..., YOUNG MASTER ...
AND HE HAS A GOOD NATURE BEING KIND NOT ONLY TO YOUNG LORDS BUT TO EVERY-ONE.
KUSANAGI IS A SKILLED SWORDSMAN ...
IT IS RUMORED THAT THE YOUNG LORD HAS PROMISED TOMA KUSANAGI A HIGH STIPEND OF 500 KOKU*.
THE DAY OF THE FIGHT

*KOKU: A JAPANESE VOLUME MEASUREMENT UNIT. IN THE EDO PERIOD USED TO INDICATE THE STIPENDS AND DOMAINS OF NOBILITY AND SAMURAI


ARE YOU READY? THE JUDGE WILL BE HYOEMON ANDO OF THE TAISHA STYLE!
NOW, EVERYONE PRESENT, GO AT THE FIGHT WITH ALL YOUR HEART!
BEFORE THAT
THERE IS SOME-THING I WOULD LIKE TO SAY.
IN OUR YAGYU SHINKAGE STYLE, IN ORDER TO PREVENT INJURIES WHILE SPARRING, WE USE BAMBOO PRACTICE SWORDS, BUT TODAY...
PEOPLE FROM OTHER STYLES ARE HERE, SO I WILL USE A WOODEN SWORD JUST AS THEY DO. PLEASE BE AWARE OF THIS. NOW GO AHEAD AND ATTACK ME!
HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE TO AVOID THE SPILLING OF BLOOD IN FRONT OF OUR YOUNG LORD.
SO, I WOULD LIKE TO RESOLVE THE FIGHT WITH A LIGHT BLOW,
AND I WOULD LIKE THIS TO BE KNOWN.
HE WILL HIT LIGHTLY, BUT WE CAN HIT AS HARD AS WE WANT ...
HE IS SO FULL OF CONFI-DENCE ...
OK, THE FIRST ONE.
THIS IS SAMON YOKOTA OF THE MUSO SHINDEN STYLE!
HERE I COME!

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BEFORE THAT

NOW, EVERYONE PRESENT, GO AT THE FIGHT WITH ALL YOUR HEART!
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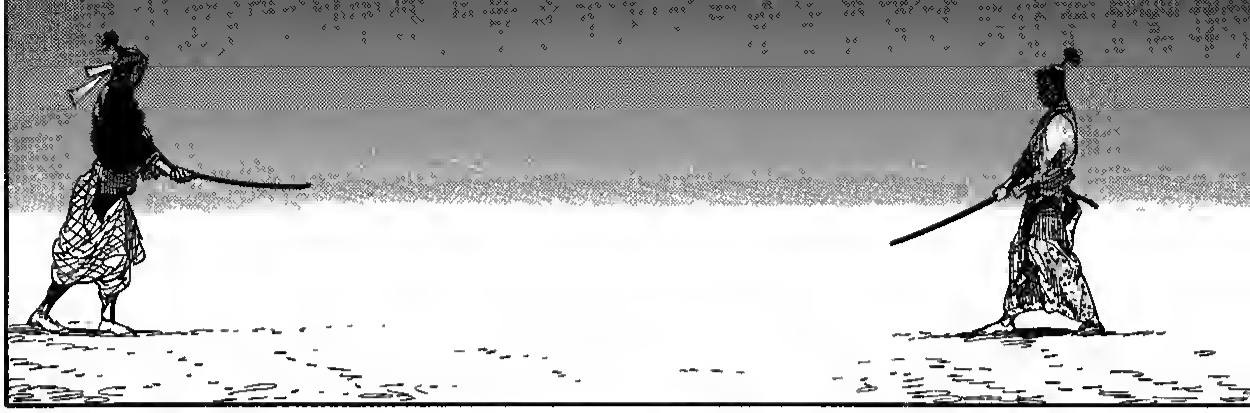
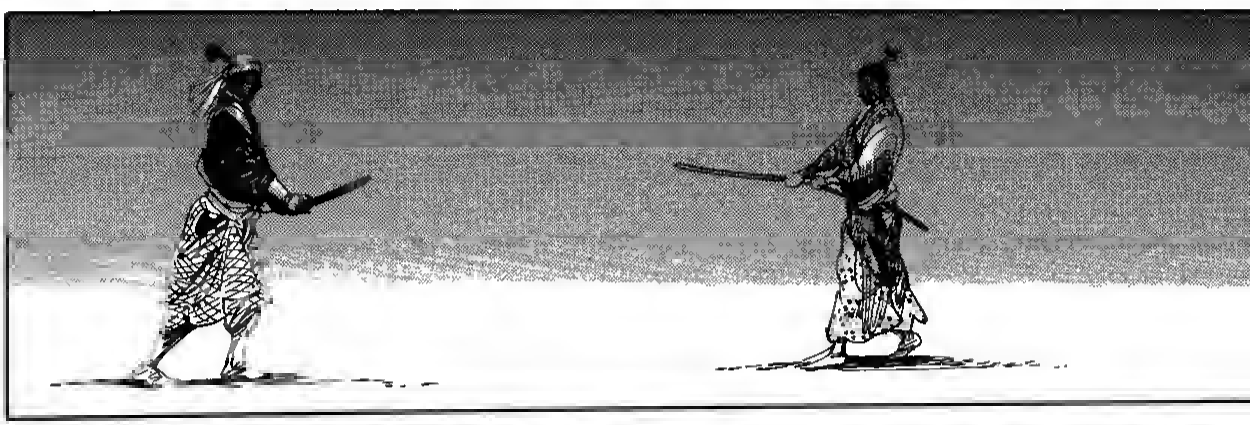
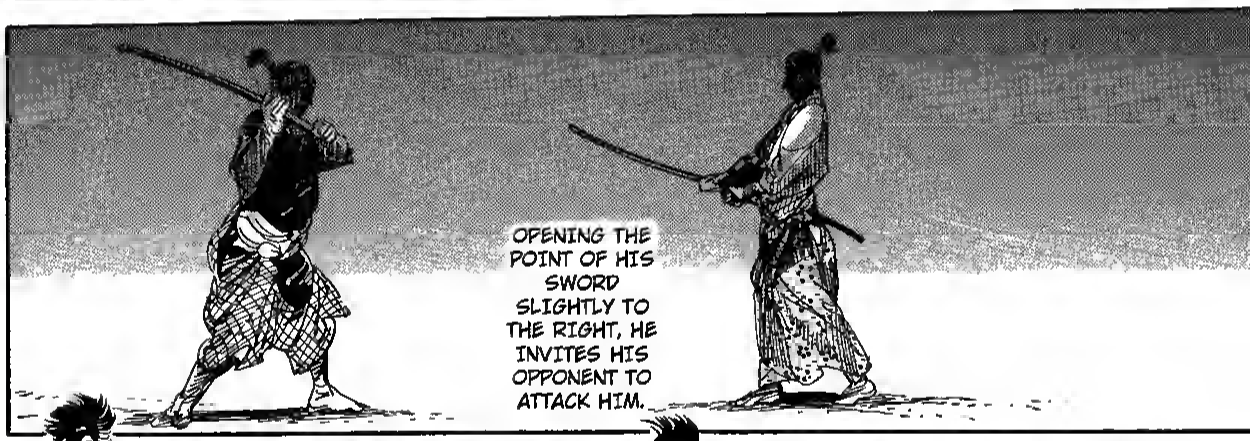





OPENING THE POINT OF HIS SWORD SLIGHTLY TO THE RIGHT, HE INVITES HIS OPPONENT TO ATTACK HIM.

SHWP!
BY WITHDRAWING HIS LEFT LEG, HE SIMULTANEOUSLY EVADES THE OPPONENT'S SWORD STRIKE AND AIMS FOR THE NECK.

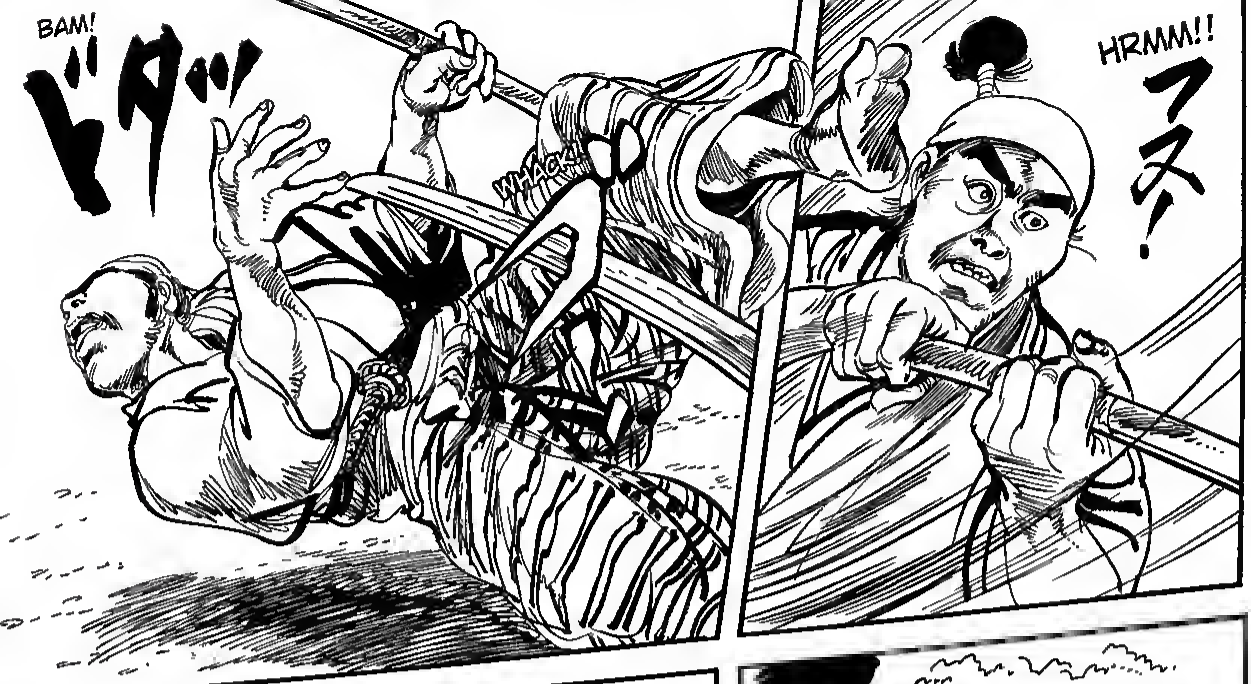
HY'AAAA!!

FWOOSH!
KAZUNOSHIN YAMAMOTO OF THE ITTO STYLE IS NEXT!
IT'S SIR YAGYU!
WE HAVE A WINNER!
SHWP!
WE HAVE A WINNER!
HOLDING THE LEFT LEG BACK LOWERING THE CENTER OF GRAVITY AND STRIKING THE GAUNTLET
SWISH!
WE HAVE A WINNER!
WE HAVE A WINNER!
STANDING SIDEWAYS AND STRIKING THE HEAD.
SWOOSH!

FWOOSH!
SHWP!
WE HAVE A WINNER!
STRIKING THE BODY WHILE EVADING TO THE RIGHT
WE HAVE A WINNER!
SWISH!
WE HAVE A WINNER!
SWOOOSH!!
HE THROWS DOWN HIS CENTER OF GRAVITY TO MAKE A STRIKE TO THE SHIN

SWISH!
WE HAVE A WINNER!
A SLIGHT MOVEMENT TO THE LEFT AND A STRIKE TO THE HEAD.
BAM!
WE HAVE A WINNER!
SWOOSH!
WE HAVE A WINNER!
WE HAVE A WINNER!
FWOOSH!
GAUNTLET PRESSURE STRIKE
WE HAVE A WINNER!
SWISH!
BACK GAUNTLET STRIKE

WE HAVE A WINNER !
WE HAVE A WINNER !
WE HAVE A WINNER !
WE HAVE A WINNER !
NUMBER 20, CHUSA SAWAJIMA COMING!
あいやーーー
HRRAA!
SWISH!
WHAT COMPLETE LOSS FOR EVERYONE - NO ONE MANAGED TO EVEN TOUCH HIS WOODEN SWORD!
JUST LIKE THAT, YOUNG MASTER! GO FOR IT!


BAM!
ドダッ
WHACK!
HRMM!!
フス!

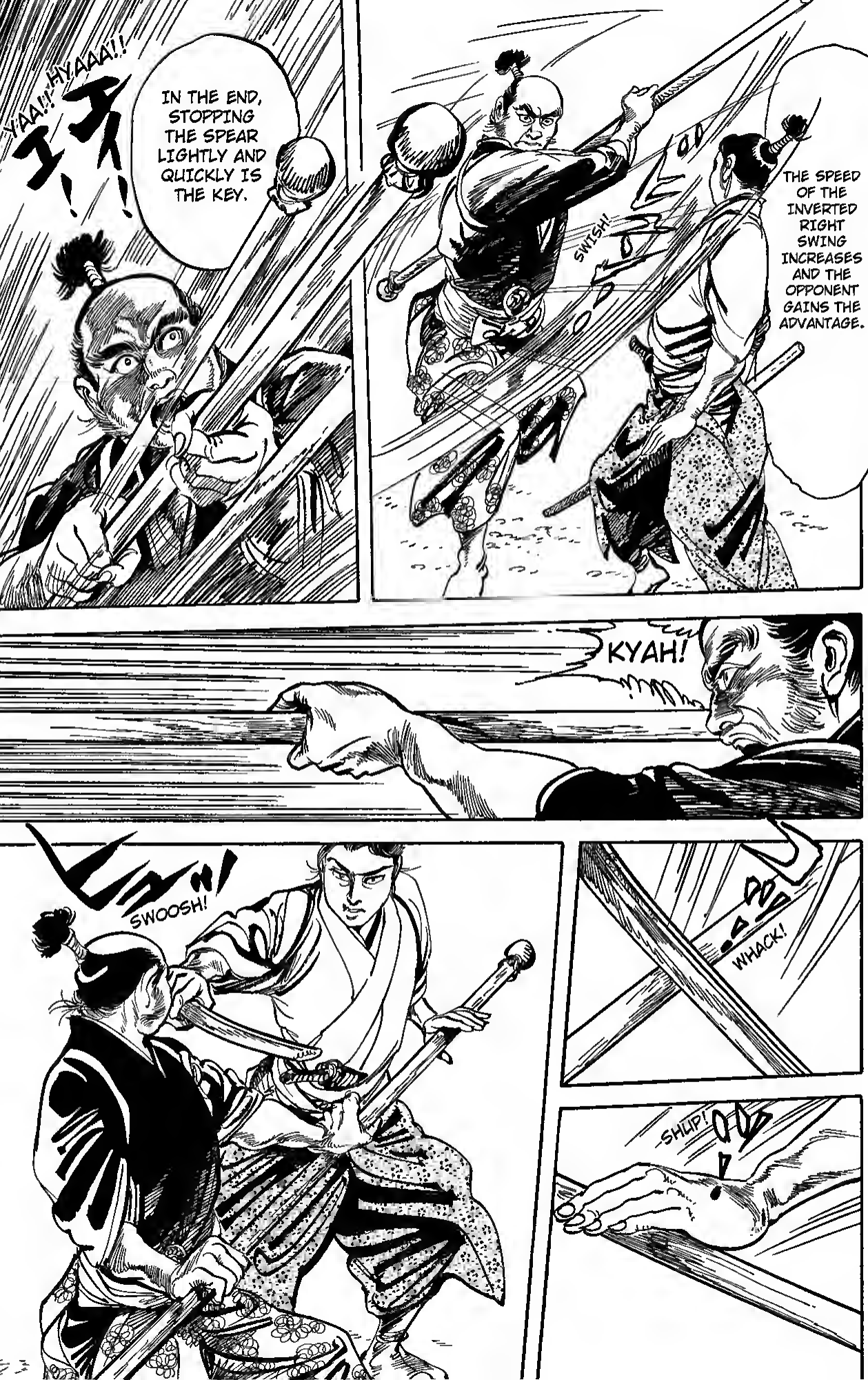
NO ONE IS ABLE TO EVEN TOUCH HIS WOODEN SWORD ...
HMMM, THAT'S QUICK BUSINESS ... THIS GUY IS REALLY A GENIUS ...

NUMBER 22, HANNOJO IWASE OF KAN STYLE SPEAR FIGHTING!

WE HAVE A WINNER!

THE PRIDE OF ALL CONTESTANTS ... IT'S UP TO YOU, IWASE!
BUT, IT CAN BE DONE WITH YOUR SPEAR TECH-NIQUE.

LISTEN, TOSHIKANE ...
HOORAH!
FOR THAT PURPOSE YOU FIRST HAVE TO BLOCK THE SPEAR.
IN ORDER TO WIN AGAINST THE SPEAR, YOU HAVE TO BE NOT AT THE DISTANCE OF THE SPEAR BUT AT THE DISTANCE OF THE SWORD.
IF YOU REPEL IT...
YOU MUST NOT TRY TO FORCEFULLY REPEL THE SPEAR.
WHOOSH!!
FWISH!
BUT IN ORDER TO DO THAT ...


YAA!!
HYAAA!!
エイ!
エイ!
IN THE END, STOPPING THE SPEAR LIGHTLY AND QUICKLY IS THE KEY.
SWISH!
THE SPEED OF THE INVERTED RIGHT SWING INCREASES AND THE OPPONENT GAINS THE ADVANTAGE.
KYAH!
SWOOSH!
WHACK!
SHLIP!

THAT WAS REALLY CLOSE.
HAAAH... HAAAH....
WHEW....
I LOST!
IS SOME-THING I WILL BE PROUD OF FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.
BEING ABLE TO TOUCH YOUR WOODEN SWORD EVEN ONCE
SHIIIIWP...
HE MIGHT THREATEN THE EXISTENCE OF THE EDO YAGYU ...
IF WE LET HIM LIVE ANY LONGER
HE IS ONLY 18 YEARS OLD BUT HAS SUCH INCRED-IBLE TALENT.

ドオオ!
WHOOSH!
SIR YAGYU IS THE WINNER!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING !?
THIS IS THE END OF THE FIGHT!

NO, I DISAGREE!
YOUR SHOULDER SHOULD BE A LITTLE RED.
SO YOU DIDN'T NOTICE THAT SIR YAGYU'S SWORD TOUCHED YOUR ROBE JUST A MOMENT BEFORE YOU STRUCK HIM?
I'M THE WINNER!
THAT'S RIGHT, SIR NAKAMURA.
YEP, LET'S DO IT.
SO, YOUNG LORD, WHAT ABOUT A RE-MATCH ?
ドオリヤーッ
URRAA!

FWACK!!
ズン!!
AARGH ...
HIS COLLARBONE IS BROKEN AND THE WOUND REACHES TO HIS LUNGS ...

AND HERE COMES THE FINAL CONTENDER. FROM THE JIKEI STYLE, TOMA KUSANAGI.
I AM YOUR LAST OPPONENT.
WE HAVE A WINNER!
SHWP!

URYAAA!!
ドアーッ
CRACK!
.....

SIR KUSANAGI, I JUDGE YOUR SKILLS AS EQUAL TO MINE.
THE REMNANT OF MY SWORD IS LONGER, ISN'T IT, SIR YAGYU.

IF THE WOODEN SWORDS BREAK,
I SAY THE DUEL NEEDS TO BE FINISHED WITH REAL SWORDS...

MARTIAL ARTS ARE HARD INDEED. ALSO, IN ORDER THAT THIS DOESN'T BECOME THE REASON FOR FURTHER DISPUTES ... RIGHT,
REAL SWORDS WOULD BE APPRO-PRIATE.

BUT THEIR DETER-MINATION TO FIGHT WAS ALREADY FREEZING THE AIR AROUND ...
MURMUR...
ザワ〜〜〜!!
YOUNG LORD ...
UHMM ...
HMMM ...
BOTH OF THESE SAMURAI ARE IRRE-PLACE-ABLE.
IT CAN NOT BE HELPED ...

RECEIVED SWORDS ...
BOTH OF THEM ...
ATTACKING HEAD ON RISKING HIS LIFE !?
AND CHARGED FORWARD.
TOSHIKANE DREW HIS SWORD OUT, HE LOWERED IT TO THE LOWER RIGHT
WHOOOSH!!

KUSANAGI SHOWED "SHOCK" AT TOSHIKANE'S UNEXPECTED APPROACH FOR A MOMENT.
KUSANAGI MOVED IN ANTICIPATION OF A STRIKE TO THE SIDE OF THE HEAD.
TOSHI-KANE'S RIGHT LEG MOVED HALF A STEP TO THE SIDE.
SHIIING!!

SLASH!

SO I STRUCK BACK.
HE CHEATED BY GOING FOR MY THROAT AFTER THAT.
ALTHOUGH SIR SAWAJIMA UNDERSTOOD THAT I GOT HIS GAUNTLET,
YOU HIT HIM ON THE FOREHEAD TEMPLE, SO HE WON'T BE ABLE TO MOVE FOR TWO MONTHS.
NUMBER 20, CHUSA SAWAJIMA IS MORE THAN A RETAINER TO ME ...

COULDN'T YOU HAVE SPARED HIM ...
YOU ...T
HOW ABOUT KUSANAGI ...
BUT STILL ...
HMM...
THE OTHER NIGHT I SAW HIM KILLING EIGHT PEOPLE IN FRONT OF A TEMPLE, SO I INTERFERED AND CROSSED MY SWORD WITH HIS.
AH, THAT RAMPANT DISGUISED MURDERER ...
MY LORD, HAVE YOU HEARD THAT RECENTLY THE EDO PEOPLE HAVE BEEN AFRAID TO GO OUT AT NIGHT BECAUSE IT IS DANGEROUS?
CLATTER!
THE FIGHTING STYLE OF THAT DISGUISED SAMURAI WAS THE SAME AS TOMA KUSANAGI'S.
HAH ...

DID YOU NOT SEE THE LOOK OF MADNESS IN HIS EYES FOR A MOMENT DURING THE MATCH?
WHAT !?
WH-
I BELIEVE IT IS THE DUTY OF THE WARRIOR TO SWING THE SWORD IN ORDER TO CRUSH EVIL.
THOSE WHO GO INSANE FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR SWORD BECOME THE TWISTED FOLLOWERS OF EVIL.
THE SWORD IS A SAMURAI'S MAIN ACCOMP-LISHMENT,

● CHAPTER 2 - FIN ●

CHAPTER 3:
STRAW POST SLASH

[第三話]
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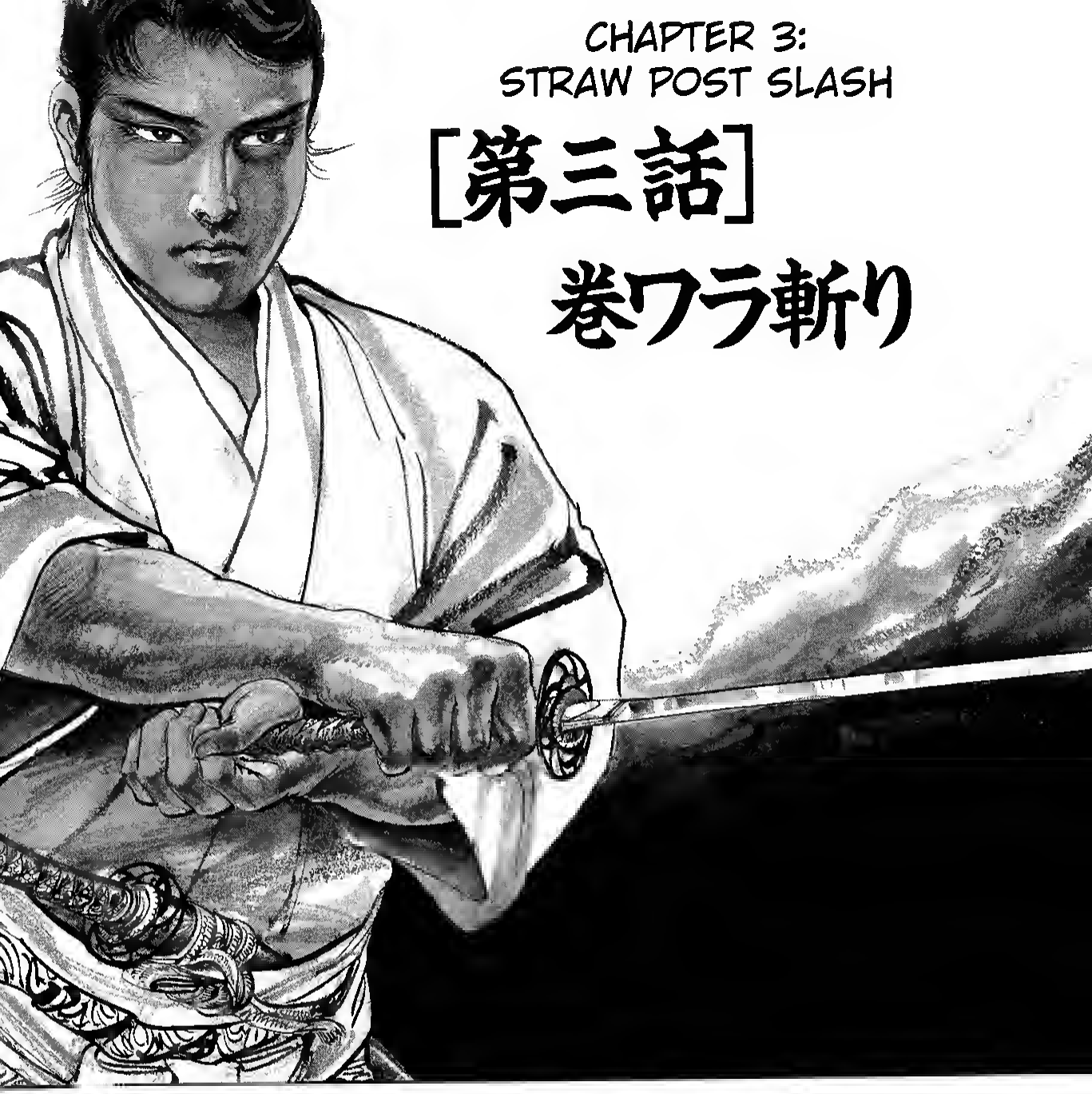
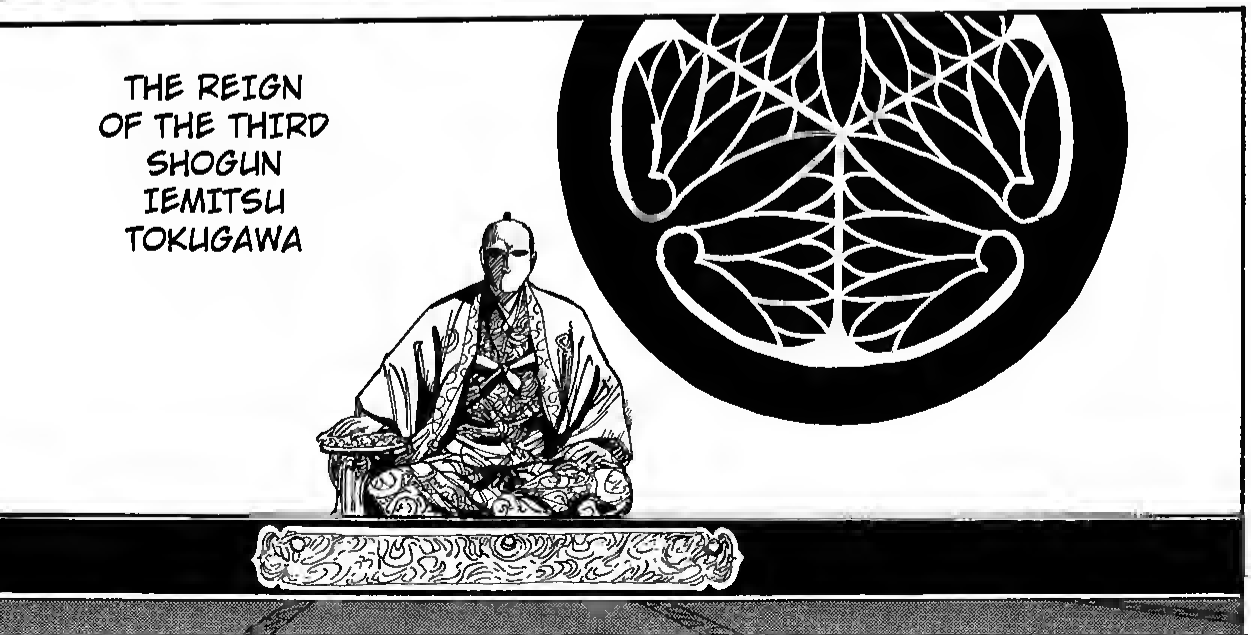


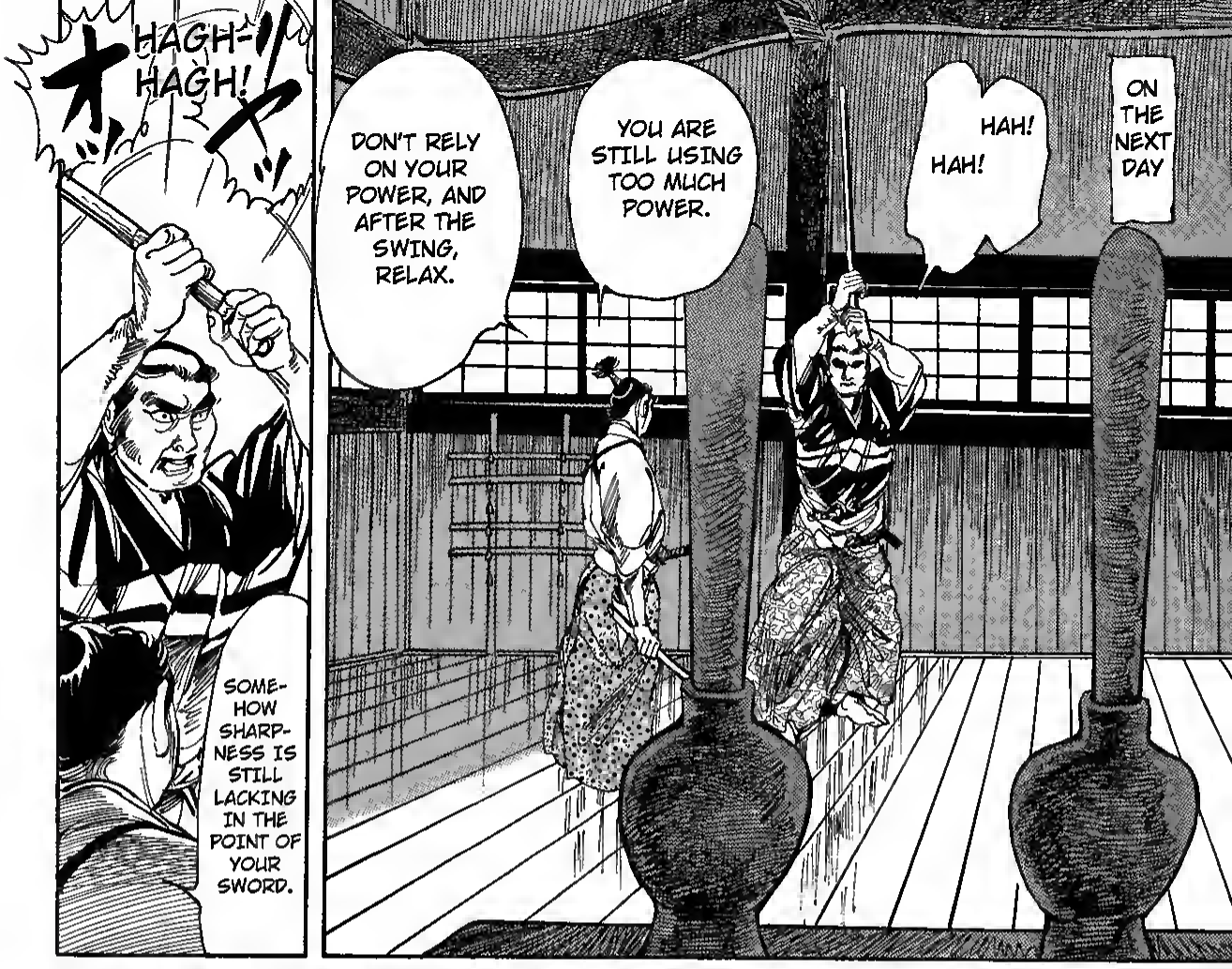


NEXT WAS OWARI YAGYU WHO TAUGHT TO YOSHINAO TOKUNAGA, HEAD OF OWARI, THE MOST SENIOR BRANCH OF THE TOKUGAWA CLAN.
HYOGONOSUKE NYOLINSAI YAGYU
TOSHIKANE YAGYU
THE MOST INFLUENTIAL SWORD STYLE IN THE COUNTRY WAS EDO YAGYU, WHICH WAS GIVEN THE DUTY OF TEACHING THE SHOGUN FAMILY.
MUNEFUYU YAGYU
JUBEI MITSUYOSHI YAGYU
TAJIMANOKAMI MUNENORI YAGYU
TOSHIKANE WHILE TEACHING DID NOT LOOK MUCH LIKE A RETAINER
THE HEIR TO THE OWARI YAGYU, TOSHIKANE YAGYU (LATER KNOWN AS RENYASAI), WHO DEFEATED 30 OF THE BEST SWORDSMEN, WAS APPOINTED AS THE KENJUTSU TEACHER OF THE OLDEST SON, YOSHINAO MITSUTOMO, DESPITE BEING ONLY 18 YEARS OLD.
SWISHHH...

HE HAD TURNED INTO A STRICT MASTER OF THE MARTIAL ARTS.
YOUR UPPER BODY IS STILL UNSTABLE AND MOVES TO ALL SIDES.
THAT'S WHY THE TIP OF YOUR SWORD IS ALSO SHAKING.
THE POINT OF THE SWORD MUST POINT STRAIGTH AHEAD IN THE SAME DIRECTION AS IF IT IS BEING PULLED BY A THREAD.
HMM
SWISHHH...
THE STRA-IGHT LOOK
IS THE BASIS OF THE SWORD TECH-NIQUE.
SWOOSH!
THE DIAGONAL SLICE FROM THE SHOULDER AS WELL...
ALSO THE REVERSE DIAGONAL SLASH TECHNIQUE.
FWISH!
THE LEFT AND RIGHT SWEEPING STROKES AS WELL
SWOOSH!
JUST BY USING THE WAIST AND LEGS - THE ARMS AREN'T USED AT ALL.
SWISH!

HAH!
HAH!
NOW LET'S PRACTICE SWINGS FROM THE TOP.
BUT THIS IS WHAT WE DO ALL DAY EVERY DAY ... ONLY STRAIGHT GAZE WALKING ...
I'M FED UP ...
UHM
IRRI-TATED
SO TO SPEAK, YOU CAN CUT YOUR OPPONENT DOWN WITH YOUR STRAIGHT GAZE ONLY.
AS YOU BRING YOUR BODY BACK TO THE FRONT, YOUR EYES ARE FIXED ON THE MID-LINE.
THE CENTER IS TRUE AND IT BECOMES YOUR HEART!
FWOOSH! FWOOSH!
YOU ARE STILL SWINGING WITH YOUR ARMS! USE THE CENTER OF YOUR BODY TO SWING!
THIS WAY YOUR POWER CAN'T REACH THE TIP OF THE SWORD!
YOUR ARMS AND SHOUL-DERS ARE STILL NOT RELAXED.
CLICK!
YOU HAVE TO STRIKE FROM YOUR STOMACH!
SHWP!
LIKE THIS?

*GRIP
THAT WAS SO-SO.
STRAINING AND NOT BREATHING PROPERLY IS THE WORST THING.
FWOOSH!
SWOOSH!!
SLAM!!


ON THE NEXT DAY
HAH! HAH!
YOU ARE STILL USING TOO MUCH POWER.
DON'T RELY ON YOUR POWER, AND AFTER THE SWING, RELAX.
HAGH-! HAGH!
SOME-HOW SHARP-NESS IS STILL LACKING IN THE POINT OF YOUR SWORD.

BUT IF I WERE FIGHTING A REGULAR SWORD-SMAN, I WOULDN'T LOSE TO HIM!
DAMN!
EXCUSE ME, BUT...
I HEARD A RUMOR THAT RECENTLY YOU GOT TWO NEW CONCUBINES ...

SO WHAT?
I'M FULL OF VIGOR IN ANY-THING I DO!
I WILL NOT LISTEN TO A GUY LIKE YOU WHO KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT WOMEN!
...
YOU SHOULD SHOW MORE MODERATION IN THE BEDROOM, I THINK ...
HMM ...
YOU ARE STILL A VIRGIN, RIGHT?
COME ON, ANSWER ME!!
YES ...
ドカ!
STUMBLE!

グビ
グビーッ
GLUG!
GLUG!
HMM, YOU ARE 18 JUST LIKE ME, SO YOU SURELY WANT TO BE WITH A WOMAN, RIGHT?
OR ARE YOU GONNA TELL ME NOW THAT YOU HAVE NEVER EVEN MASTUR-BATED?
HOW ABOUT THAT?
WHACK!
I'VE DONE THAT BEFORE ...
ギャハハハハ
GAH HA HA HA HA!

I TOOK UP THE SWORD FROM WHEN I WAS FOUR YEARS OLD AND ALL THIS TIME MY MIND HAS BEEN OBSESSED ONLY WITH THAT NIGHT AND DAY,
SO I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO DO THAT.
ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY THAT I AM INFERIOR TO YOU?
NO, THAT'S BECAUSE I WAS BORN INTO THE WARRIOR CLASS IN A MARTIAL ARTS FAMILY, SO ...
BUT I WAS BORN INTO THE WARRIOR CLASS, AS WELL!
I'M THE GRANDSON OF DAIGONGEN TOSHO (IEYASU)!
HMM ...
WELL, OK.
DAMN IT!
WHACK!
ANYWAY, I'M SURE THAT YOU...
WANNA DO 'IT'.
YOU ARE YOUNG, AFTER ALL.

GRRR!
IF I NEEDED A WIFE, I WOULD FIND ONE BY MYSELF ...
ALRIGHT, I'LL HAVE THE RESPON-SIBILITY OF FINDING YOU A WOMAN.
SO DO YOU LIKE THEM BIG OR SMALL?
WHOOSH!
GET LOST RIGHT AWAY!
HEY, SON OF A BITCH!
FWACK!

HMPH!
MAKING THE YOUNG LORD ANGRY ...
PTCH!
CLATTER
HE HAS A PRETTY SHORT TEMPER, BUT HE ALSO LIKES PEOPLE A LOT.
THAT'S HOW IT IS.
PERHAPS YOU ARE TOO TENSE FROM THE RESPONSIBILITY OF REPRESENTING THE SHINKAGE STYLE.
BEING TENSE IS NO GOOD, NO GOOD ...

RAW BAMBOO SHOOTS INSIDE
SHLIP!
SPLOOSH!

SLASH!
ズバッ
THE THICK ONE IS MADE OF TWO TATAMI MATS, SO IT'S A TOTAL OF FOUR.
YEP! GREAT SLIT!
TWO FOLDED ONES COMPARE ROUGHLY TO THE HUMAN BODY'S THICKNESS, WHICH MEANS THAT THIS COULD CUT TWO BODIES.
ALRIGHT ... I'LL GO FOR THREE ROLLS NOW!
YOUR SWORD IS WIDE AND TOUGH ...
ORRAA !!

THE BLADE MUST HAVE TWISTED A BIT.
BUT THE CUT OF THE THIRD ROLL IS NOT UNIFORM.
YEP, VERY GOOD!
AWESOME! NO WONDER! IT'S GONDO!
SLASH!
ザン!
THEN I WILL GO FOR FOUR.
ALRIGHT!

GONDO JUST CUT FOUR ROLLS! WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?
AH, THE YOUNG TEACHER IS HERE.
SIR GONDO,
PLEASE SHOW ME YOUR STANCE BEFORE YOU CUT.
...?
THIS POSTURE SHOWS THAT YOU ARE TENSE AND JUST ABOUT TO SPEED UP.
THIS WAY ...

WOW!
WHAT A SWIFT MOVE!
SWOOSH!
YOUR LEFT ARM AND SHOULDER WILL GET CUT OFF BEFORE YOU CAN HIT.
BEAR THIS IN MIND.
IT IS A MARTIAL ART WHICH DEFEATS THE ENEMY, WITH THE MINIMUM OF EFFORT, AND THE SHORTEST AND FASTEST OF MOVEMENTS.
THE SHINKAGE STYLE ISN'T MEANT TO TEST THE SWORD'S SHARPNESS.
STRAW CUTTING WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO ONLY CONFIRM THE CUTTING TECHNIQUE.
B-, BUT YOUNG TEACHER,
STRAW CUTTING HAS ALWAYS BEEN USED BY SWORDSMEN.

EVEN ONE ROLL ONLY
IS ENOUGH.
HE DOES NOT TRY TO USE THE SWORD'S STRIKE POWER (FROM ACCELERATION)
SWOOSH!
FWISH!
HE IS ONLY USING HIS BODY AND IS HARDLY MOVING HIS HANDS AT ALL.
THE POWER COMES FROM THE TORSO, NEAR THE NAVEL. THE CUT IS MADE USING ONLY THIS PRESSURE.
THEN THE SWORD TIP POINTS TO THE OPPONENT AND NATURALLY, THEY HAVE NO CHANCE TO REACT.

THE JAPANESE SWORD HAS OUTSTANDING POWER WHEN THE OBJECT IS HIT VERTICALLY, BUT
BUT WHEN IT DOESN'T HIT VERTICALLY, IT MIGHT BEND AND THUS LOSE ITS EFFICIENCY.
90°
THEREFORE, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE SWORD BLADE IS POINTED STRAIGHT VERTICALLY.
!!
... YES, HE DIDN'T ACCELERATE AT ALL, AND CUT JUST BY SWINGING THE SWORD BLADE.
PLUS, HE DID THAT JUST WITH HIS RIGHT ARM EXTENDED.

CLUNK
HMM ... THEY SAY THAT ONE TATAMI ROLL EQUALS THE THICKNESS OF THE HUMAN NECK, SO ...
INDEED, IT'S NOT ABOUT HOW YOU CUT YOUR OPPONENT - THE ONLY IMPORTANT THING IN REAL BATTLE IS TO DEFEAT YOUR ENEMY ...
EVEN SO, WHEN FACING AN ARMORED ENEMY, THAT MIGHT NOT BE SUFFICIENT.
INDEED, YOU CAN SAY THAT AS WELL.
STILL, THE YOUNG TEACHER SAID THAT THE PURSUIT OF STRAW CUTTING IS VERY FAR FROM MARTIAL ARTS.
HEH HEH, TOSHIKANE IS A PRETTY GOOD MARTIAL ARTIST.
WHAT ... DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?

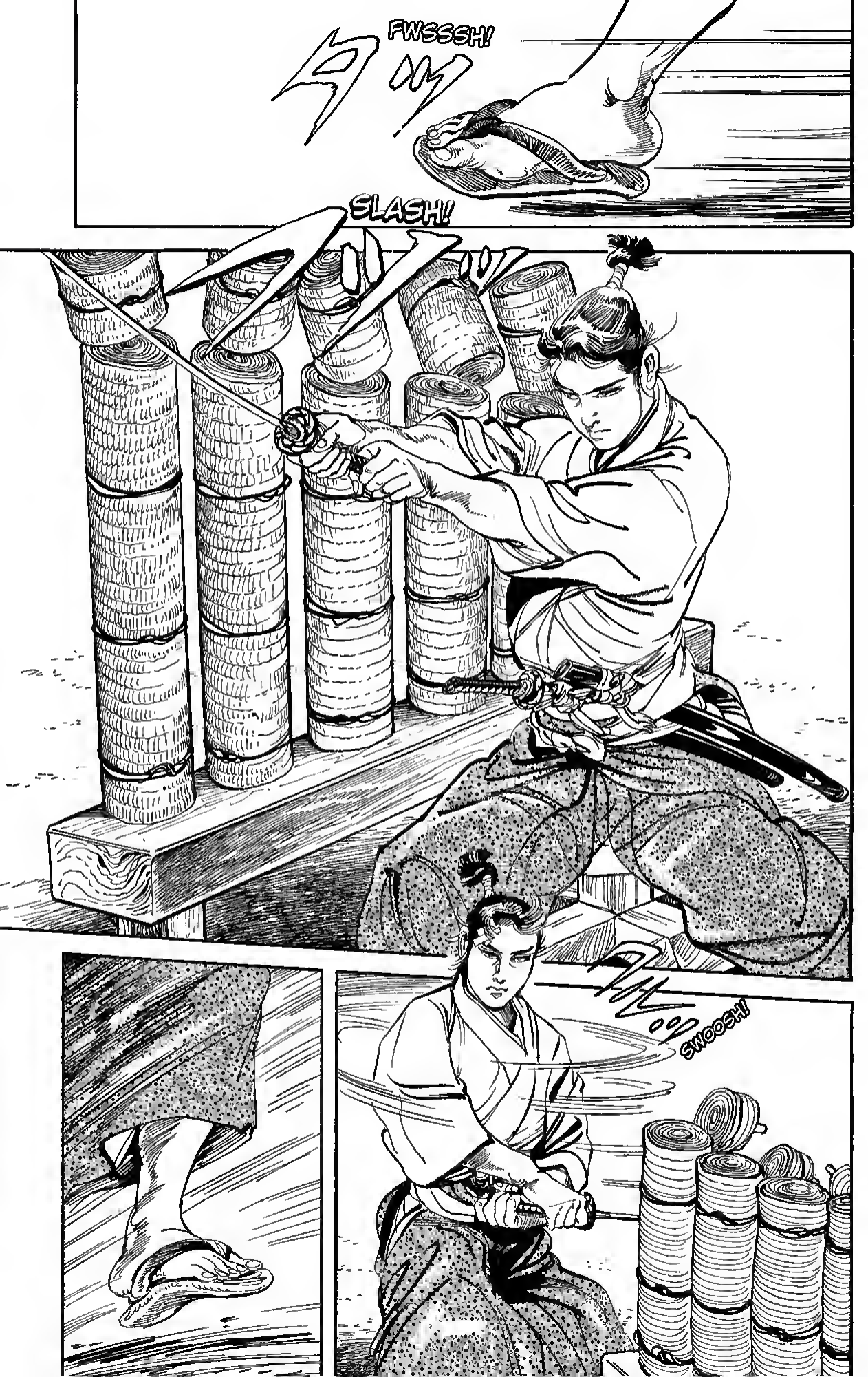
HE'S QUICK-WITTED BUT HE LACKS POWER.
BEFORE ANYONE REALIZES, HE COMES UP WITH A FEASIBLE EXCUSE, TO AVOID BEING FOUND OUT.
HE-HE
I SEE!
THAT MIGHT BE THE CASE, INDEED ...
STRAW CUTTING! WE HAVE TO DO IT! WE HAVE TO DO IT!
SOONER OR LATER, I WILL DO IT TOO!
YEAH! YEAH! WOW!
YES!
THUD!

FWOOOSH!
HYAAÁ!
POSTURE WHEN ACCELERATING

...
IT'S THE YOUNG TEACHER ...
AS FAR AS I KNOW, ALL PRESENT HERE HAVE STUDIED THE WAY OF THE SWORD UNDER MY FATHER, HYOGONOSUKE OR HIS DISCIPLES.
YES ...
I'M STILL YOUNG, BUT FROM THIS SPRING, I GOT FROM HYOGO-NOSUKE A LICENSE AND WAS APPOINTED AS THE FIFTH MASTER OF THE SHINKAGE STYLE.
WE KNOW THAT ...
THE JAPANESE SWORD JUST NEEDS TO BE TOUCHED AT THE PROPER ANGLE TO THE OPPONENT'S BODY TO CUT IT.
ARE YOU AWARE OF THAT?
YES, WE ARE ...

THEN WHY DO YOU GO AFTER THE STRAW CUTTING WITH SO MUCH VIGOR?
BY CUTTING THROUGH MANY STACKED STRAW POSTS, IT PUTS POWER INTO THE SHOULDERS AND ARMS...
...WHICH IS ACTUALLY DETRIMENTAL TO YOUR TECHNIQUE AS A MARTIAL ARTIST...
BUT YOUNG TEA-CHER!
CUTTING STRAWS IS PRACTICED WIDELY BY THE OTHER STYLES!
THAT'S RIGHT!
I HEARD THAT THERE IS ONE IN THE EDO YAGYU CLAN WHO CAN CUT THROUGH FIVE ROLLS OF DOUBLE TATAMI WITH A SINGLE CUT!
HERE THE OWARI AND EDO YAGYU...
ARE ALWAYS COMPETING WITH EACH OTHER!
YES.
ARE YOU PREPARED TO LOSE TO THE EDO YAGYU!?
DOESN'T THAT MAKE YOU FEEL BITTER?
PREPARE FIVE STRAWS.
?!
COME ON, DO IT.
...?

THE REAL MARTIAL ARTS ARE FLEXIBLE TO WEAKNESSES.
JUST BY PASSING MY INTERNAL VOLITION TO THE TIP OF THE SWORD.
NO EXTRA FORCE SHOULD BE USED.
THROW AWAY ALL EMOTIONS.
KEEP YOUR FEELINGS CALM LIKE THE SURFACE OF A MOUNTAIN LAKE.
NO EXTRA FORCE SHOULD BE USED ...


FWSSSH!
SLASH!
SWOOSH!

AMAZING!
SUCH THINGS ARE NOT PRICED VERY HIGHLY, BUT ...
YOUR ENEMIES LINE THEMSELVES UP LIKE THIS FOR YOU ...
I WONDER IF THERE IS A PLACE WHERE...
SHING!
SLASH!

SLASH!

AMAZING!
SUCH THINGS ARE NOT PRICED VERY HIGHLY, BUT ...
YOUR ENEMIES LINE THEM-SELVES UP LIKE THIS FOR YOU ...
I WONDER IF THERE IS A PLACE WHERE...
SHING!

THE YAGYU SHIN-KAGE STYLE
ISN'T A SPECTACLE TO ENTERTAIN THE COMMON FOLK.
IT IS A SWORD USE METHODOLOGY TO DEAL WITH AN ENEMY WHO COMES IN INFINITE VARIETIES.
TEACHER!
FWMMP!
ドカ
YOUR LESSON HAS BEEN DEEPLY INGRAINED IN MY MIND!
YOUNG TEACHER!

YAAAAAH!!
HYAA!!
HAH!
HAH!
HYAAH!
YAAAGH!!
HUFF! PUFF!
YEP.
IT IS TOSHIKANE YAGYU. YOU CALLED FOR ME.

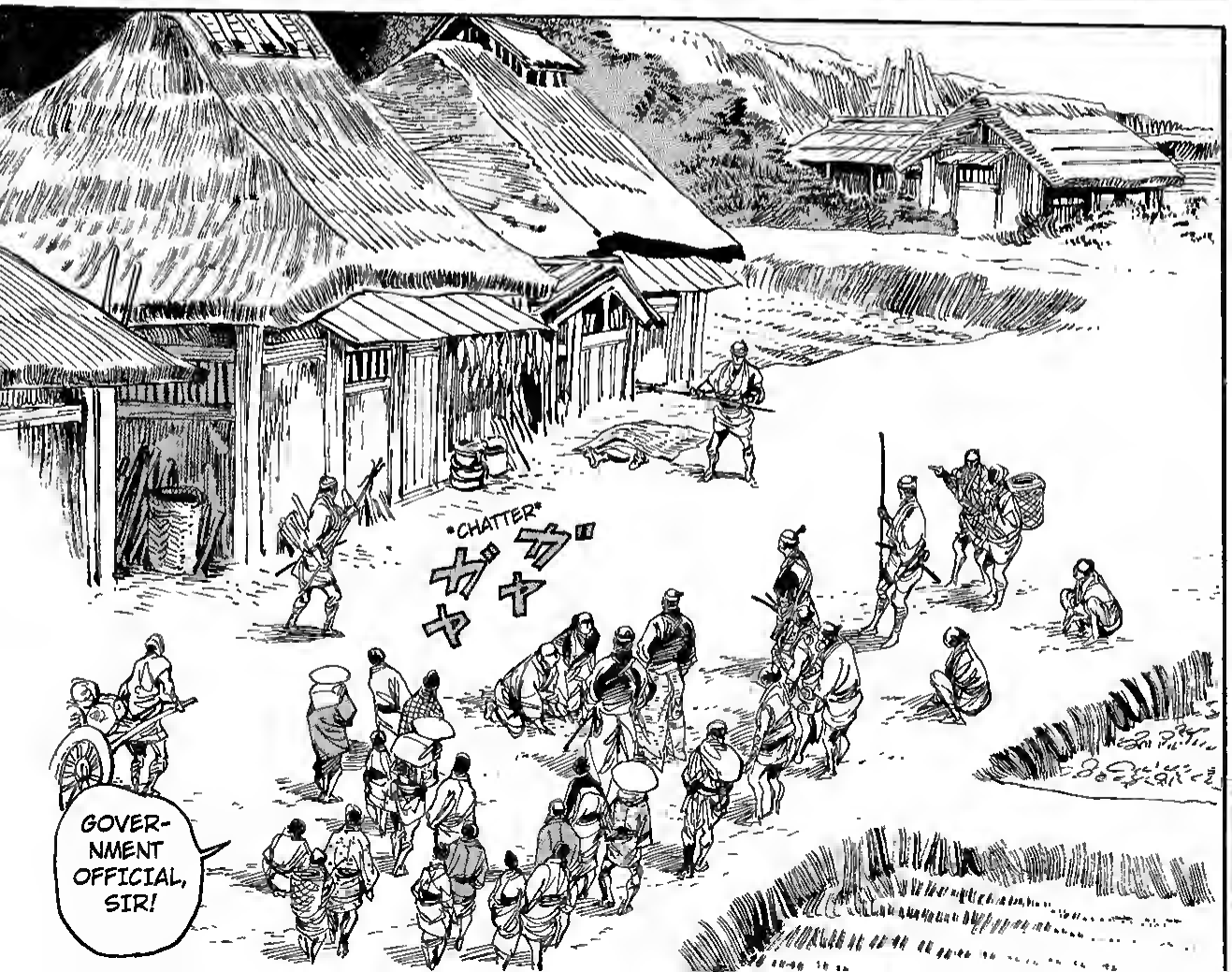
YEP! I WANT TO MAKE IT EVEN BETTER - TAKE IT TO PERFECTION!
HOW IS THIS SWING?
COMPARED TO BEFORE YOUR SHOULDERS ARE MORE RELAXED.
...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WHAT?
I WAS ALSO NOT FULLY RELAXED ...
BY THE WAY, LORD ...

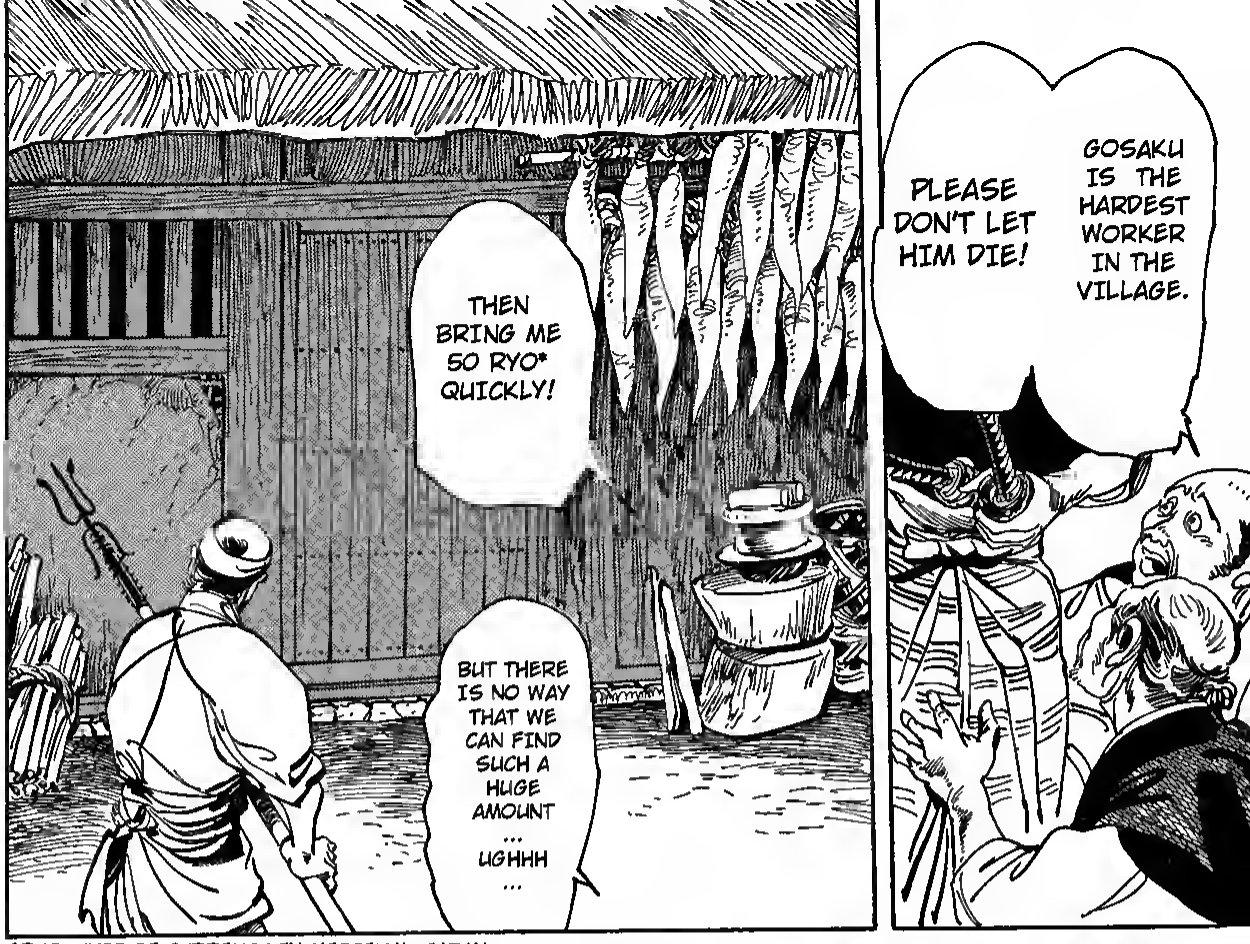
...
I WOULD LIKE YOU TO TEACH ME ABOUT WOMEN ALSO AT SOME POINT ...
I WON'T FORGIVE YOU IF YOU GO EASY ON ME!
VERY WELL! IF YOU WANT ME TO TEACH YOU, THEN MAKE ME STRONGER THAN ANYONE!

● CHAPTER 3 - FIN ●

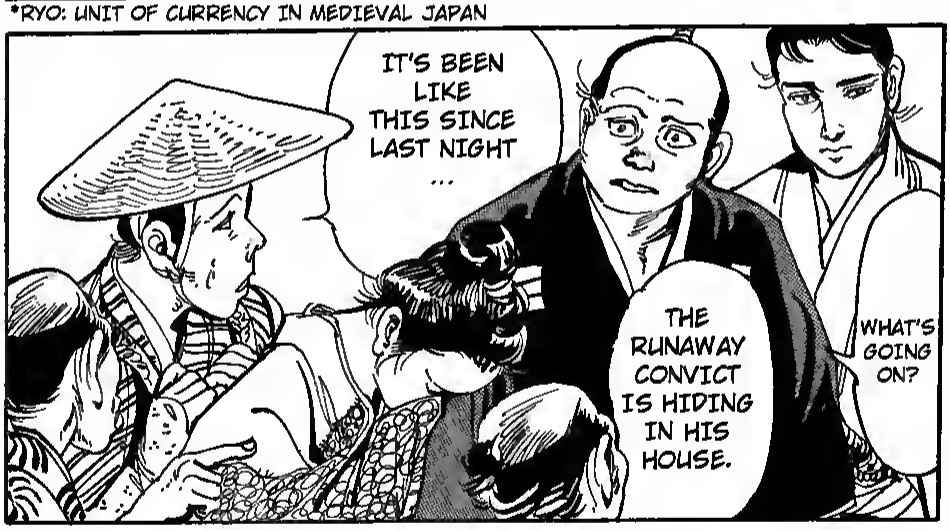
CHAPTER 4: THE ENTICING FEINT

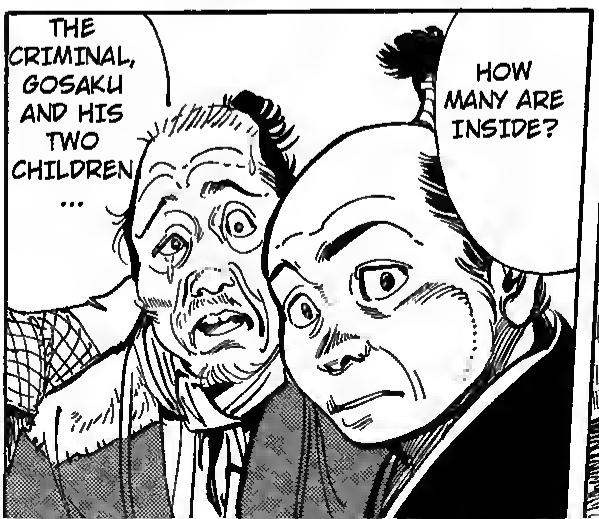
[第四話] 誘いの気

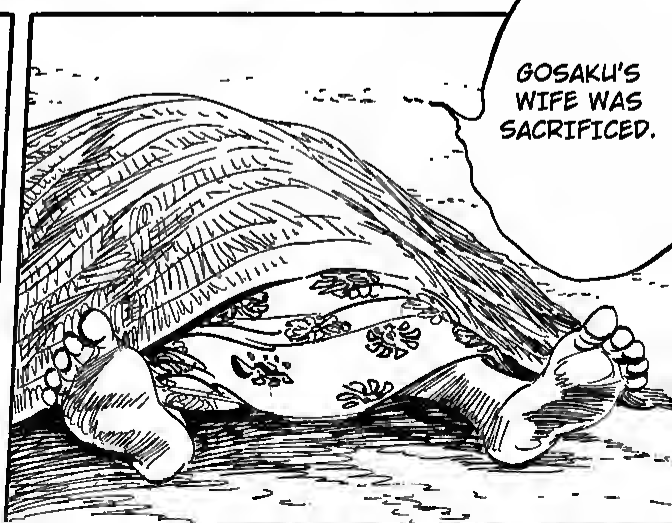


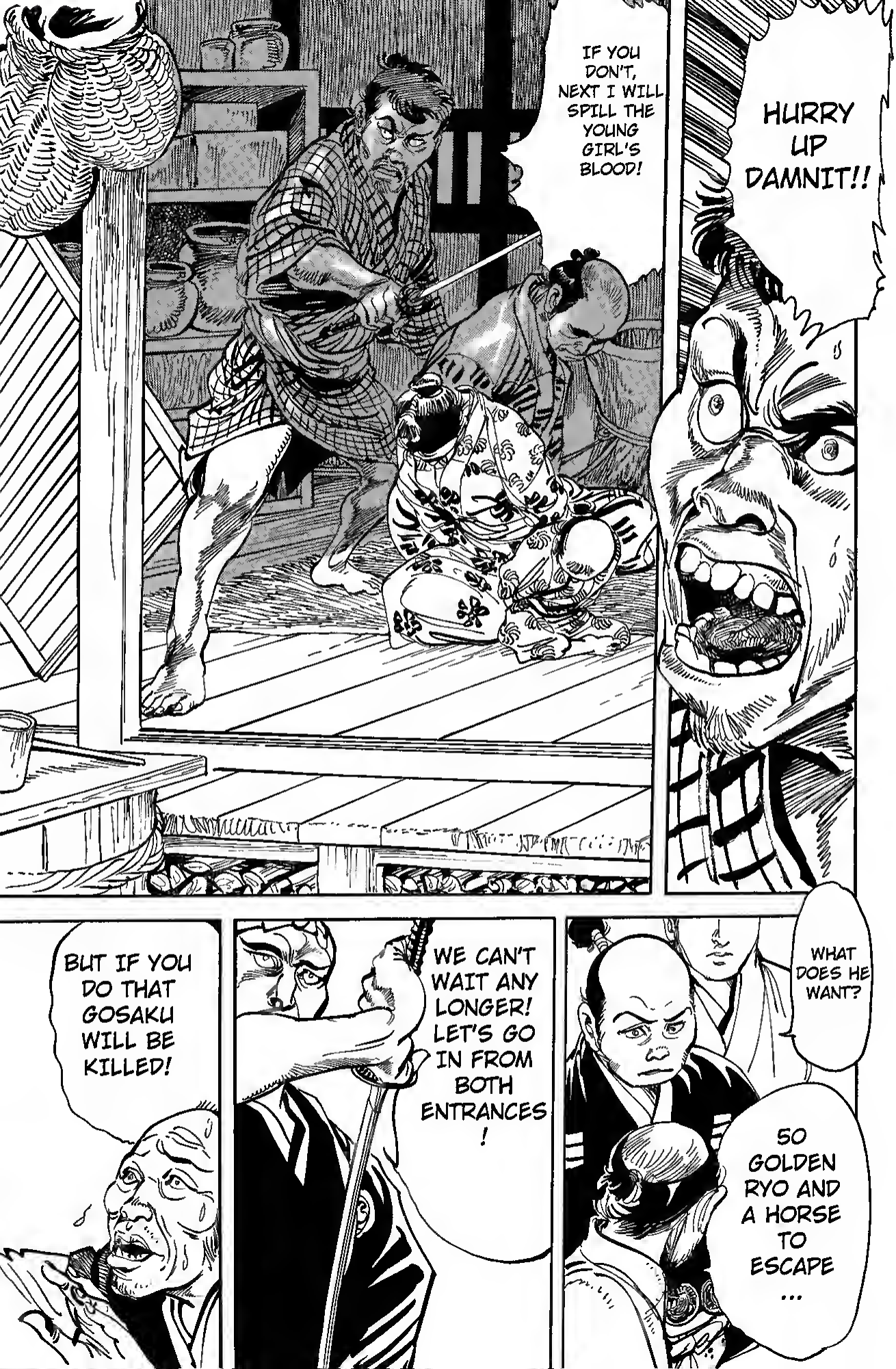

THEN BRING ME 50 RYO* QUICKLY!
BUT THERE IS NO WAY THAT WE CAN FIND SUCH A HUGE AMOUNT ... UGHHH ...
PLEASE DON'T LET HIM DIE!
GOSAKU IS THE HARDEST WORKER IN THE VILLAGE.

*RYO: UNIT OF CURRENCY IN MEDIEVAL JAPAN



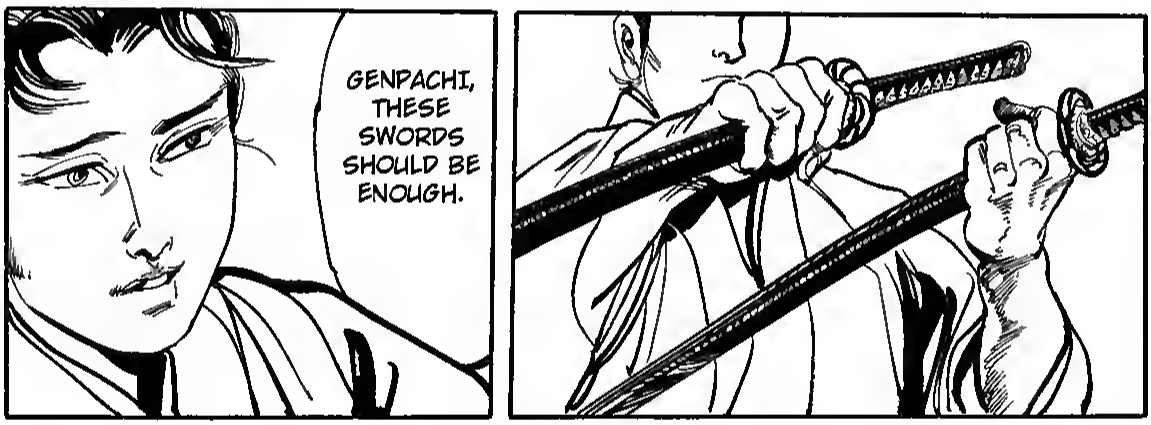


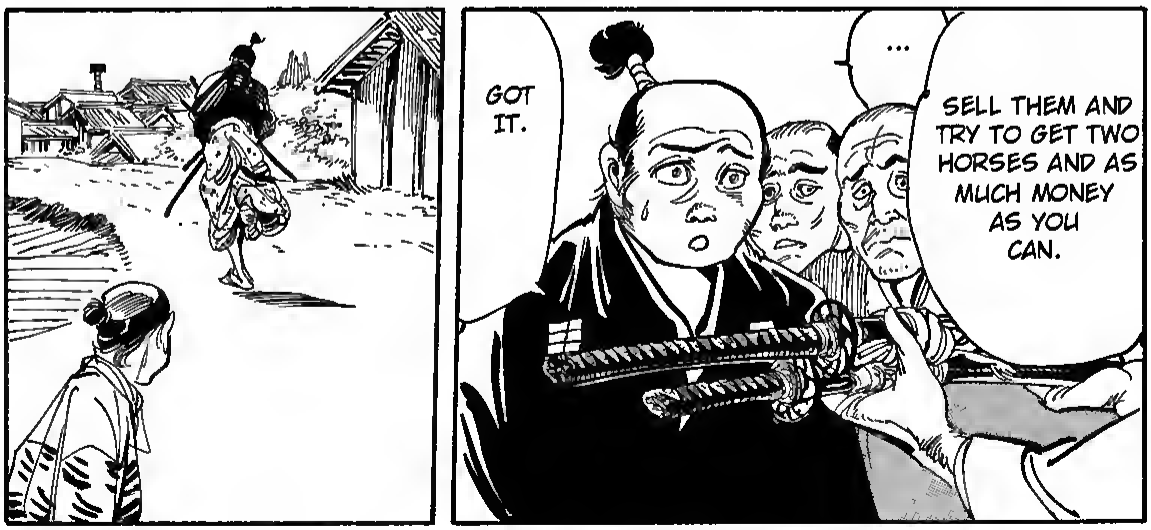



HURRY UP DAMNIT!!
IF YOU DON'T, NEXT I WILL SPILL THE YOUNG GIRL'S BLOOD!
WHAT DOES HE WANT?
SO GOLDEN RYO AND A HORSE TO ESCAPE ...
WE CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER! LET'S GO IN FROM BOTH ENTRANCES !
BUT IF YOU DO THAT GOSAKU WILL BE KILLED!

GET OFF ME!!
BUT WE MIGHT SAVE AT LEAST ONE OF THE CHIL-DREN.
HE WON'T BE EASY TO HANDLE AT ALL.
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, BUT KUMAZO SEEMS TO BE SKILLED AND SLY.
...
LET ME HELP.
PLEASE WAIT.
...
WE USE THE KOKUDAKA SYSTEM BASED ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION WITH THE WARRIOR CLASS OBSERVING.
AS YOU KNOW
IN OUR COUNTRY

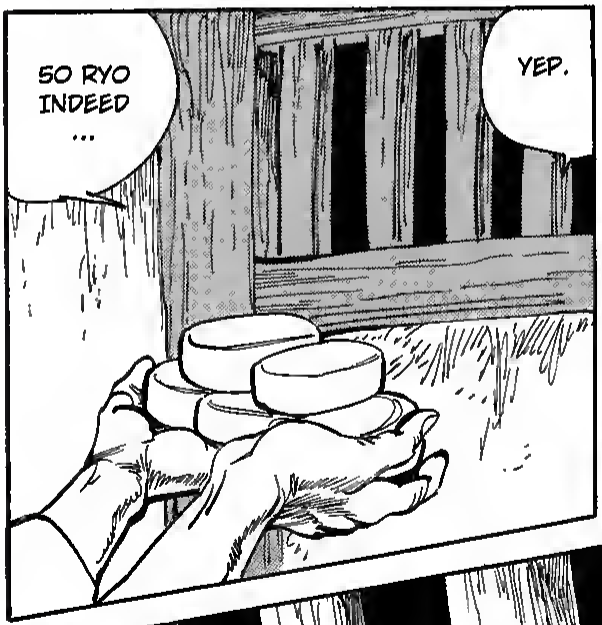
WE CAN'T LET THE HARD-WORKING FARMERS BE LEFT IN TROUBLE.
THUS, AS PART OF THE CONTRO-LLING WARRIOR CLASS,
IN OTHER WORDS, IT IS THANKS TO THE PRODUCING CLASS, THE FARMERS, THAT WE WARRIORS CAN LIVE AS THE HIGHEST CLASS.
...

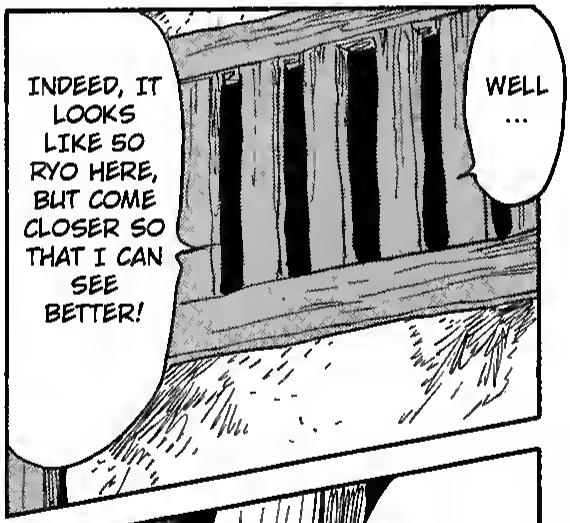

GENPACHI, THESE SWORDS SHOULD BE ENOUGH.

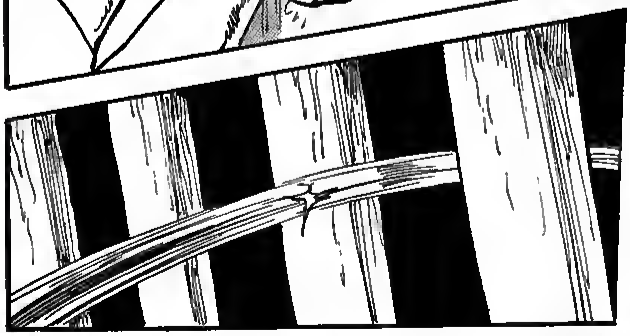

GOT IT.
...
SELL THEM AND TRY TO GET TWO HORSES AND AS MUCH MONEY AS YOU CAN.

BUT KUMAZO IS A HIGH CALIBRE CRIMINAL GUILTY OF HEAVY CRIMES SUCH AS SEVERAL THEFTS AND MURDERS.
I UNDERSTAND YOUR POSITION VERY WELL.
SO WE CAN'T LET HIM GET AWAY!
BUT FOR CATCHING HIM,
...
IF YOU LET FOUR PEOPLE DIE, YOU WILL HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY.
THEN, FIRST NOW ...
I BELIEVE THAT THE SAMURAI WAY IS TO FIRST FOCUS ON SAVING THE LIVES OF THE FATHER AND CHILDREN.
SOUND OF HOOVES
YOUNG MASTER!
ADDING MY LONG SWORD, I WAS ABLE TO GET TWO HORSES AND 80 RYO.
THANK YOU.

HERE THEY ARE, AS YOU ASKED.
LISTEN WELL, YOU DISGRACED KUMAZO! HERE ARE THE HORSES AND 50 RYO YOU ASKED FOR!
DON'T COME ANY CLOSER!







*MOCHI = BUNDLE OF OVAL-SHAPED COINS

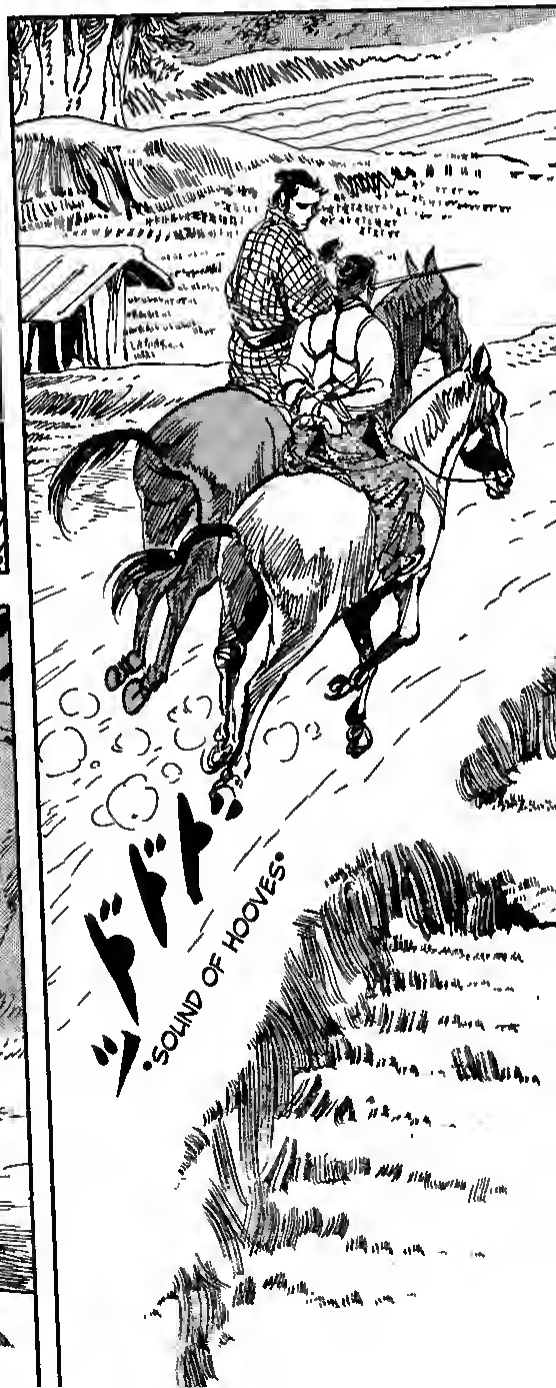
GOOD JOB, KID!
YEP, IT'S REAL.
"BITE BITE"
CHING!
WON'T THAT BOTHER YOU?
IT SEEMS THAT YOU PLAN TO TAKE THE BABY WITH YOU SO THAT YOU ARE LET GO, BUT THE BABY WON'T STOP CRYING.
HAHAHA, KUMAZO.
AND BRING THE HORSE CLOSE TO THE ENTRANCE.
THEN PUT THEM IN THE HORSE SADDLE.
WAAAH!
HOWEVER, AN ADULT MIGHT TRY TO GET AWAY, SO THAT'S ALSO NOT GOOD.

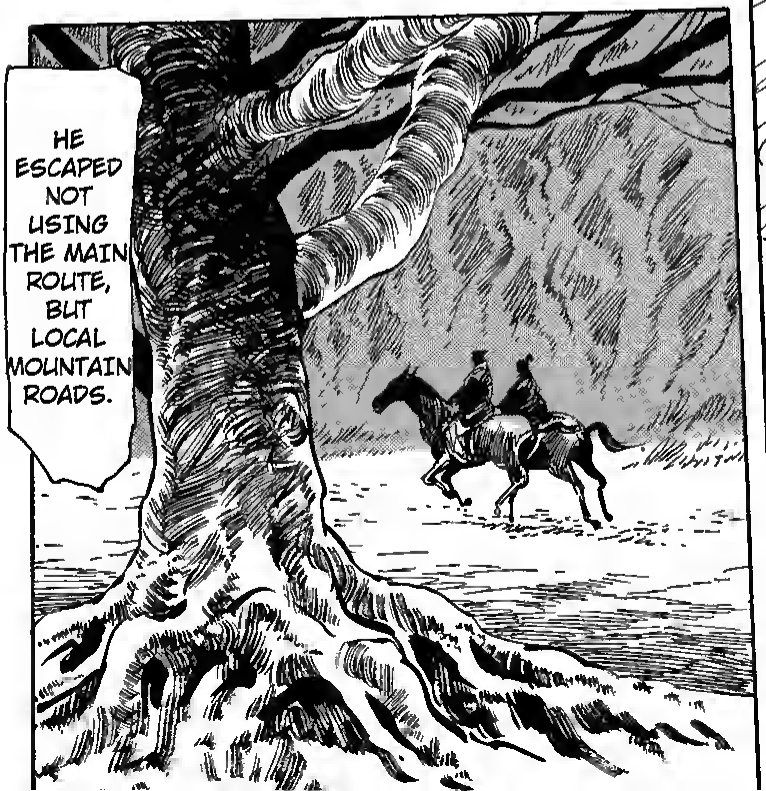
GOVE-RNM-ENT OFFI-CIAL,
ADULT WHO WOULDN'T OPPOSE ME?
BUT AN ADULT, WHO WOULDN'T OPPOSE YOU, WOULD BE FINE, RIGHT?
SO YOUNG MASTER, YOU PLANNED TO BECOME A HOSTAGE AND THAT'S WHY YOU ASKED FOR THE SECOND HORSE ...
TIE ME UP VERY WELL.
IF I SURVIVED AND THEY DIED THAT WOULD LEAVE ME WITH REGRET FOR MY WHOLE LIFE.
IF I HAD PRETENDED NOT TO SEE WHAT WAS GOING ON AND THIS COMMON FAMILY WERE ALL MURDERED?
GEN-PACHI
YOUNG MASTER! THIS IS TOO RECKLESS! PLEASE DON'T DO IT!

WHEN YOU HAVE REGRET, YOUR HEART BECOMES IMPURE.
THE FOUNDER OF MY STYLE, MASTER KAMIIZUMI SAID THAT IF YOU HAVE REGRET IN YOUR HEART..
...YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GRASP THE MYSTERIES OF THE WAY OF THE SWORD.
IF I CAN'T REACH THE BOTTOM OF THE MYSTERIES OF THE SWORD,
THERE IS NO PURPOSE FOR ME TO KEEP LIVING AS A SWORDSMAN ...
HOW IS IT, KUMAZO? THIS WAY I WON'T BE ABLE TO OPPOSE YOU AT ALL, RIGHT?
HMMM... THE YAEGAKI STYLE... THE PERFECT KNOT. YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO MOVE AT ALL...
EVEN IF YOU MUST RISK YOUR LIFE, YOU INTEND TO FULFILL YOUR DUTY AS HEAD OF THE FAMILY ...

BUT ... KID! UNLESS THEY TIE YOU UP ONCE MORE, I WILL NOT USE YOU AS A HOSTAGE!
HMMM, GOOD OFFER YOU MAKE, KID!
IF YOU TAKE ME AS A HOSTAGE, I WILL GIVE YOU 30 EXTRA RYO.
NO ONE TRY TO STOP OR FOLLOW US BY ANY MEANS, GOT IT?

WELL, SEE YA!
LIFE IS A GAMBLE! TO THINK THINGS WOULD GO THIS WELL, IT MUST BE MY LUCKY DAY!


ドドド
SOUND OF HOOVES


HE ESCAPED NOT USING THE MAIN ROUTE, BUT LOCAL MOUNTAIN ROADS.

HEY KID,
CLIP CLOP
パカ
YOU ARE A FOOL FOR BEING SO COMPASS-IONATE.
THE ONE WHO WAS ENTICED INTO THIS SITUATION ...
...IS YOU.
I WAS ENTICED INTO IT, YOU SAY?
DAMN! I WAS THE ONE WHO CHOSE YOU AS A HOSTAGE!
AT THE END, WHEN I DON'T NEED YOU ANYMORE, I WILL MOST PROBABLY KILL YOU, TOO! HAHAHA!

WELL, I GUESS THAT I SHOULD SETTLE DOWN SOMEWHERE AND USE THIS MONEY AS CAPITAL TO START SOME KIND OF BUSINESS ...
NOT ONLY DID I MANAGE TO ESCAPE THE AUTHO-RITIES,
BUT I ALSO MANAGED TO GET ALL OF THESE 80 RYO!

CAN YOU EVEN COOK?
YEP ... MAYBE OPEN A SMALL RESTA-URANT ...

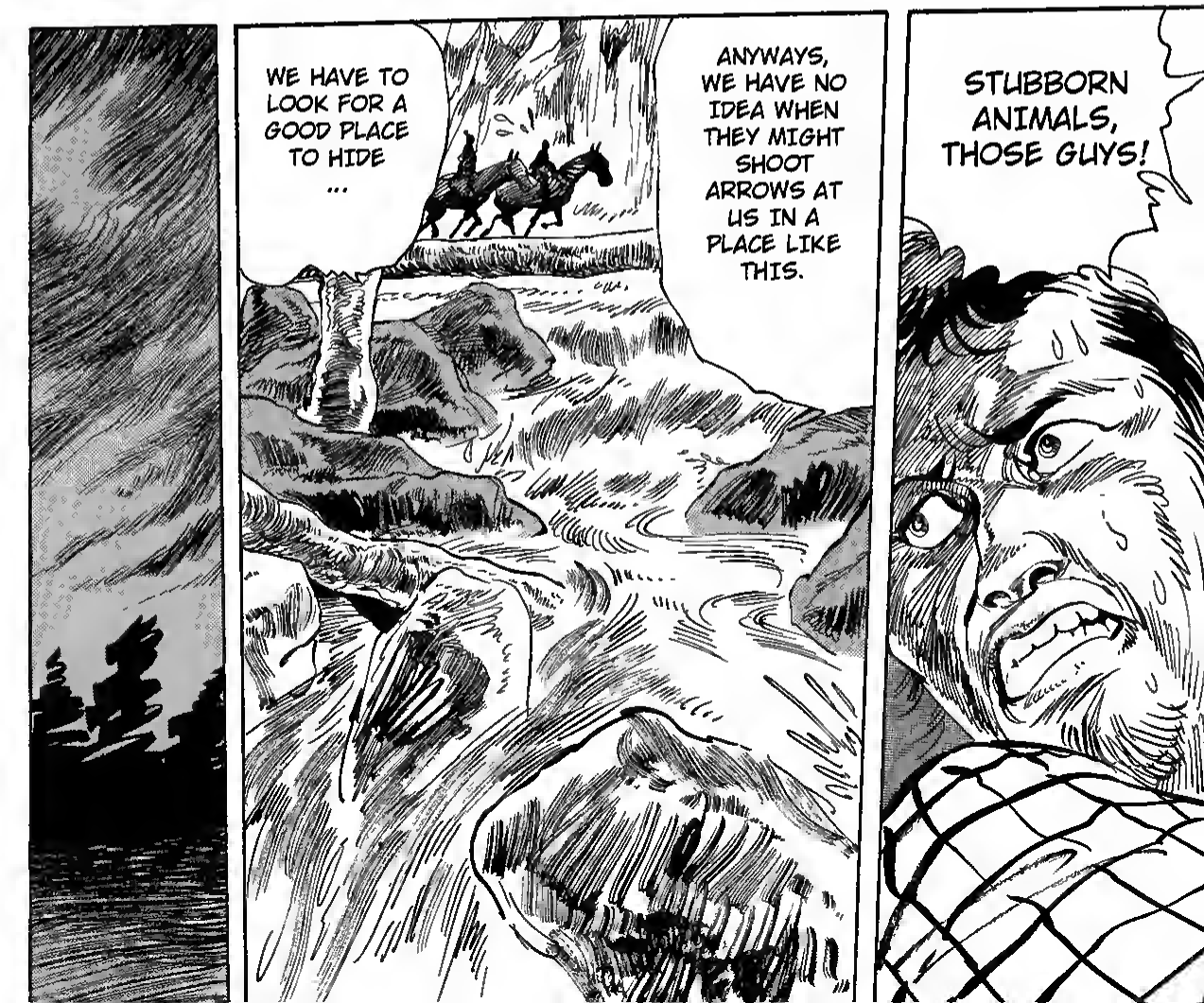
BUT WHEN I WAS 20 I ALMOST MURDERED MY MEAN BOSS ... SINCE THEN, I'VE HAD NO LUCK WHATSOEVER.
I'M NOT AS BAD INSIDE AS I LOOK LIKE. I MIGHT LOOK LIKE THIS, BUT LONG TIME AGO I WAS SERIOUSLY WORKING AS AN APPRENTICE AT A RESTAURANT.

IF YOU MANAGE TO LIVE ON, YOU WILL DEFINITELY DO IT.
HEH HEH... I SHOULD HIRE A PRETTY GIRL TO ATTRACT CUSTOMERS.
BUT WITH THE SKILLS I LEARNED THEN ... I AM SURE THAT I CAN OPEN A STORE, WHOSE TASTE PEOPLE WILL APPRECIATE ...
HUH !?
THE PEOPLE FOLLOWING US HAVE INCREASED FROM THREE TO FIVE.
!
THE WAY YOU GOT THAT MONEY DREW A LOT OF ATTENTION. PEOPLE WHO ARE AFTER THAT MONEY HAVE SHOWN UP.
THOSE GUYS ARE AFTER THE MONEY.
SAMURAI AREN'T THAT FAST.
THESE ARE YOUR PEOPLE, RIGHT? DAMN! I'LL CUT OFF YOUR NOSE NOW!

DAMN! WHO ARE THESE GUYS?
JUDGING FROM THOSE SMALLS BOWS, THESE ARE RUFFIANS AND THIEVES.
THESE GUYS ARE EVEN WORSE THAN YOU.
IT'S 80 RYO AFTER ALL, SO THAT BIG AMOUNT MANAGED TO UNITE THEM TOGETHER.
THEIR FEET ONLY ARE WELL-BUILT.
HAH! RUFFIANS! I LEARNED KENJUTSU WHEN I WAS AN APPRENTICE TO A SAMURAI, SO I AM QUITE CONFIDENT OF MY SKILLS WITH THE SWORD.
THIEVES ARE PRETTY GOOD AT THE NINJA ARTS. IF THERE ARE MANY OF THEM, A REGULAR SWORDSMAN WOULD GET KILLED.

HEYAH!
THEY WOULD ONLY ATTACK IN THE MOST IDEAL CIRCUM-STANCES.
PLUS THOSE GUYS ARE CUNNING AND TENA-CIOUS.
CLIP CLOP!
SOUND OF HOOVES
ドドド
CLIP CLOP!
SPLASH! SPLASH!

WE ARE ON HORSES, HAHAHA! THEY CAN'T CATCH UP WITH US!
I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I? THOSE GUYS' FEET ARE NOT LIKE REGULAR PEOPLE'S.
DAMN!


WE HAVE TO LOOK FOR A GOOD PLACE TO HIDE ...
ANYWAYS, WE HAVE NO IDEA WHEN THEY MIGHT SHOOT ARROWS AT US IN A PLACE LIKE THIS.
STUBBORN ANIMALS, THOSE GUYS!

WE WILL BE ABLE TO STAY AWAY FROM THE ARROWS HERE.
THOSE DEATH-LOOKING BRATS!
DAMN IT!
THE THIEVES USE NOT ONLY SMALL BOWS, BUT ALSO ASH THROWN IN THE EYES, POISON ARROWS, SMOKE BALLS, FIRE ARROWS, TORTURE BY FIRE - ALL KINDS OF SLY AND MEAN TRICKS.
STAYING HERE MIGHT END UP BEING DISADVAN-TEGOUS TO US.
HAHAHA! IF YOU DON'T WANNA GET KILLED, IT'S EASY.
GIVE THEM THE MONEY QUICKLY.
JUST ...

UHM ...
BUT THEY KNOW THE WHOLE STORY. SO YOU MIGHT BE THE ONLY ONE TO GET KILLED.
THEN DO AS YOU LIKE.
DON'T JOKE ABOUT THAT! THIS IS MY CAPITAL TO REBUILD MY LIFE!
AT THIS WAY YOU WILL BE GOING TO THE UNDER-WORLD BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.
SEEMS THAT YOU REALLY SUFFER FROM SLEEP DEPRI-VATION.
HAH!
NODDING OFF
HOWEVER, THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY THAT YOU CAN SURVIVE AND KEEP SOME OF THE MONEY.
DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT YOU CAN DEFEAT THOSE THIEVES, WHO WORK BEST AT NIGHT, LIKE THIS?

CAN YOU DEAL WITH THOSE GUYS?
...
THAT'S TO UNTIE ME.
HMMM... NO WONDER YOU'RE SO BRAVE...
I HAVE BEEN TAUGHT HOW TO DEAL WITH ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE UNDER ALL KINDS OF CIRCUMSTANCES.
I AM THE FIFTH HEIR OF THE OWARI YAGYU CLAN. BORN INTO A MARTIAL ARTIST FAMILY..
DON'T BE STUPID!
BUT YOU WILL HAVE TO GIVE ME BACK 75 OF THE 80 RYO.
I WILL SAVE YOUR LIFE. BUT ...
BUT IF I UNTIE YOU, YOU WILL KILL ME!
WHAT CAN I DO WITH ONLY 5 RYO?
YOU SAID THAT LIFE IS A GAMBLE, RIGHT?
OR TOMORROW ...
IF THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU, THEN LET'S GET KILLED HERE TONIGHT.
THE SAMURAI ALWAYS STANDS BEHIND HIS WORDS.

HMPH.
SHUT UP!
SAMURAI NEVER LIE.
WILL KEEP YOUR PROMISE, RIGHT?
BUT YOU ...
RATHER THAN THAT.
...
SLEEP ... PRETEND LIKE YOU ARE FULLY ASLEEP.
THAT WAY, THEY WILL DEFINITELY COME TONIGHT.
WE'LL ENTER THE WORLD OF SLEEP AND MAKE THE ENEMY BELIEVE WE ARE ASLEEP.
NOW, WE'LL ENTICE THE ENEMY.

THEY ARE HERE ...
I CAN HEAR THEM STEPPING ON THE GRASS.

"SKEWER!"
"GRAB"
"STAB!"

SLICE!
SLASH!
CRASH!
PTOO!
POISON DART
"STAB!"

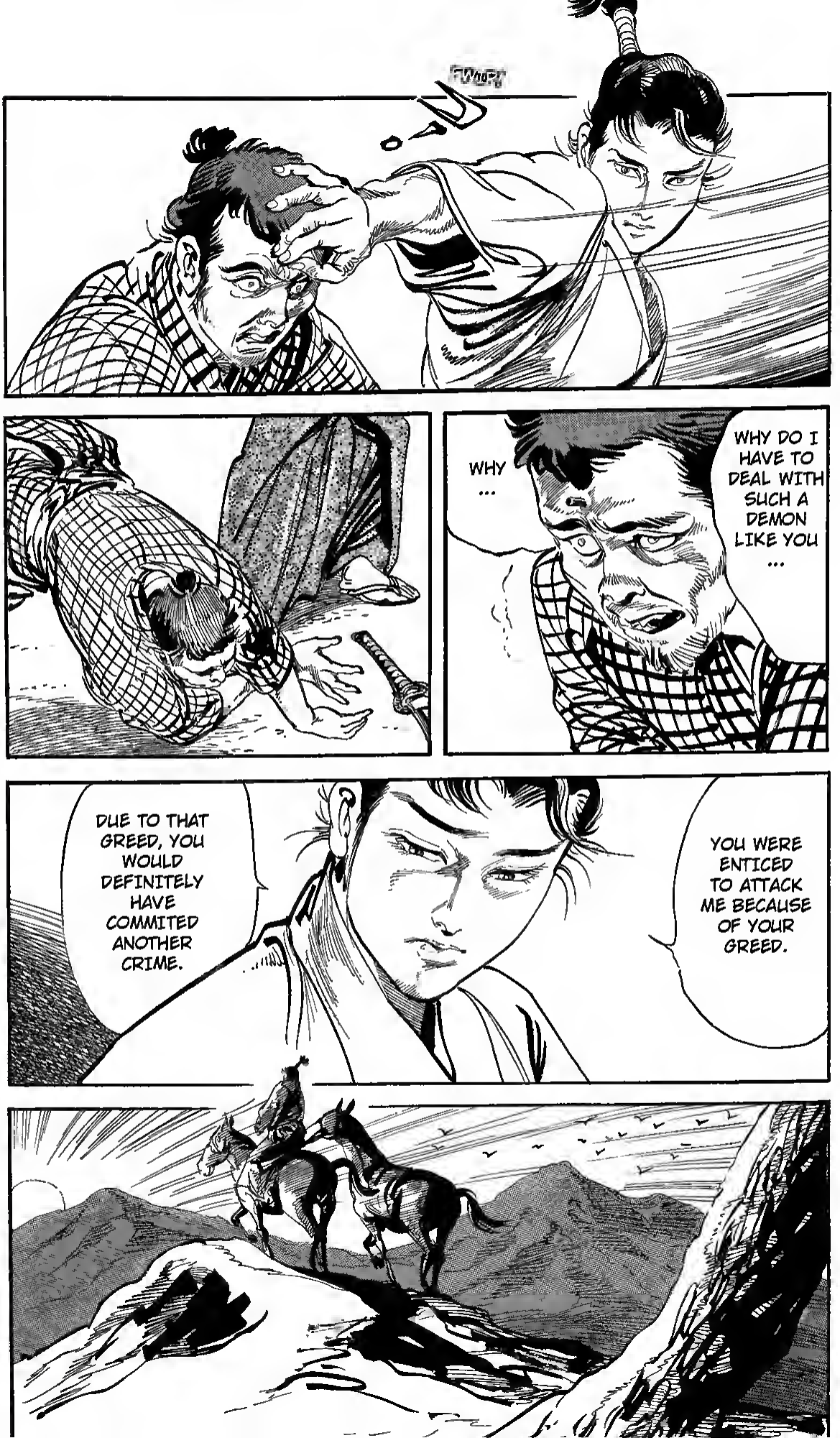
FWOOO!
FWOOO!
ヒュン
ヒュン
HAH!
LACK!

FWOOSH!
FWIP!

A-AMAZING SKILLS ...
YOU CAUGHT THOSE FLYING ARROWS ...
WITH YOUR BARE HANDS ...
YOU HAVE TO MEASURE THE TRAJECTORY OF THE ARROWS RIGHT BEFORE THEY ARE FIRED.
THE REST IS BREATHING PROPERLY.
YOU AREN'T HUMAN! YOU ARE A DEMON!
YOU ARE ...
STILL ALIVE BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T GIVE INTO GREED.
AS PROMISED.
HERE IS YOUR 5 RYO.

FARE-
WELL.
I'M
TAKING
THE
REMAI-
NING 75
BACK.

THE NEXT MOMENT, KUMAZO WAS ENTICED BY THE CHANCE TO ATTACK HIM.
AT THAT MOMENT, THERE WAS HARDNESS AROUND TOSHIKANE'S RIGHT HIP.
SHWP!


FWOP!
WHY ...
WHY DO I HAVE TO DEAL WITH SUCH A DEMON LIKE YOU ...
YOU WERE ENTICED TO ATTACK ME BECAUSE OF YOUR GREED.
DUE TO THAT GREED, YOU WOULD DEFINITELY HAVE COMMITED ANOTHER CRIME.

兵法は心法。
誘いの隙、誘いの気は、
兵法の常道なり
MARTIAL ARTS ARE THE ART OF THE HEART. TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES AND ESCAPING ENTICEMENT IS A PART OF THE NORMAL PATH OF THE WARRIOR.

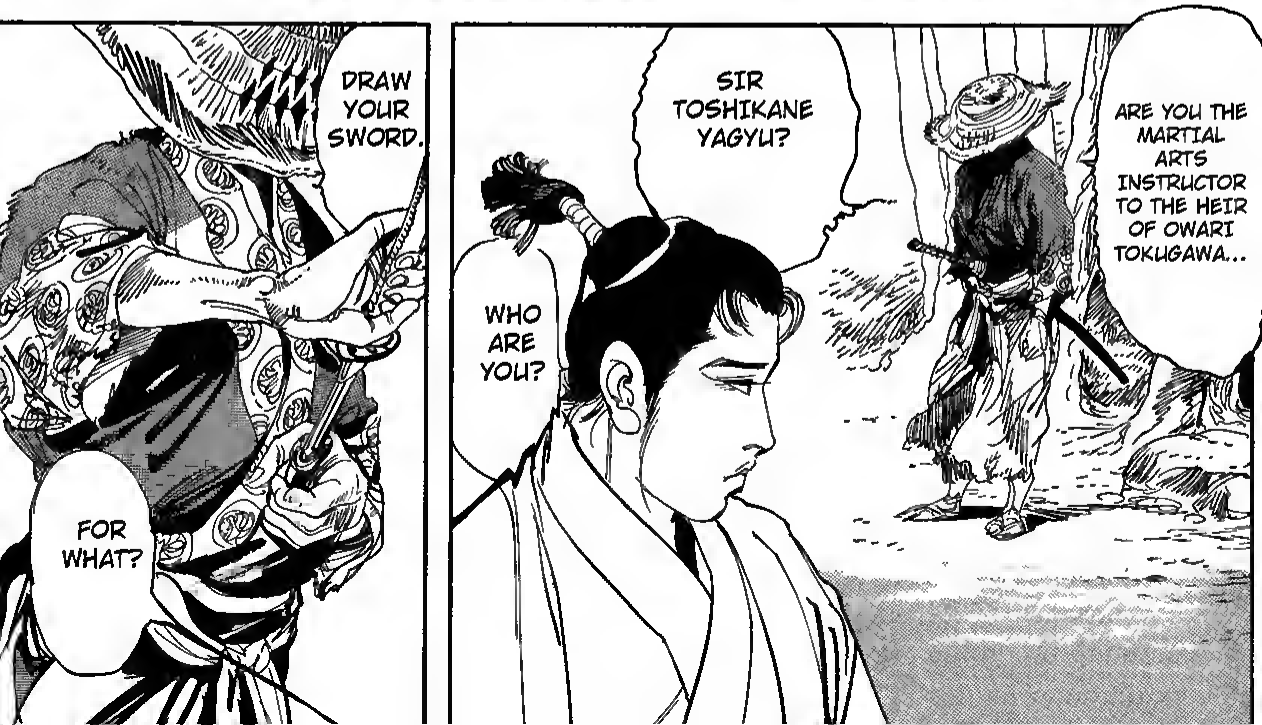
● CHAPTER 4 - FIN ●

CHAPTER 5:
SWORDSMAN OF PURGATORY

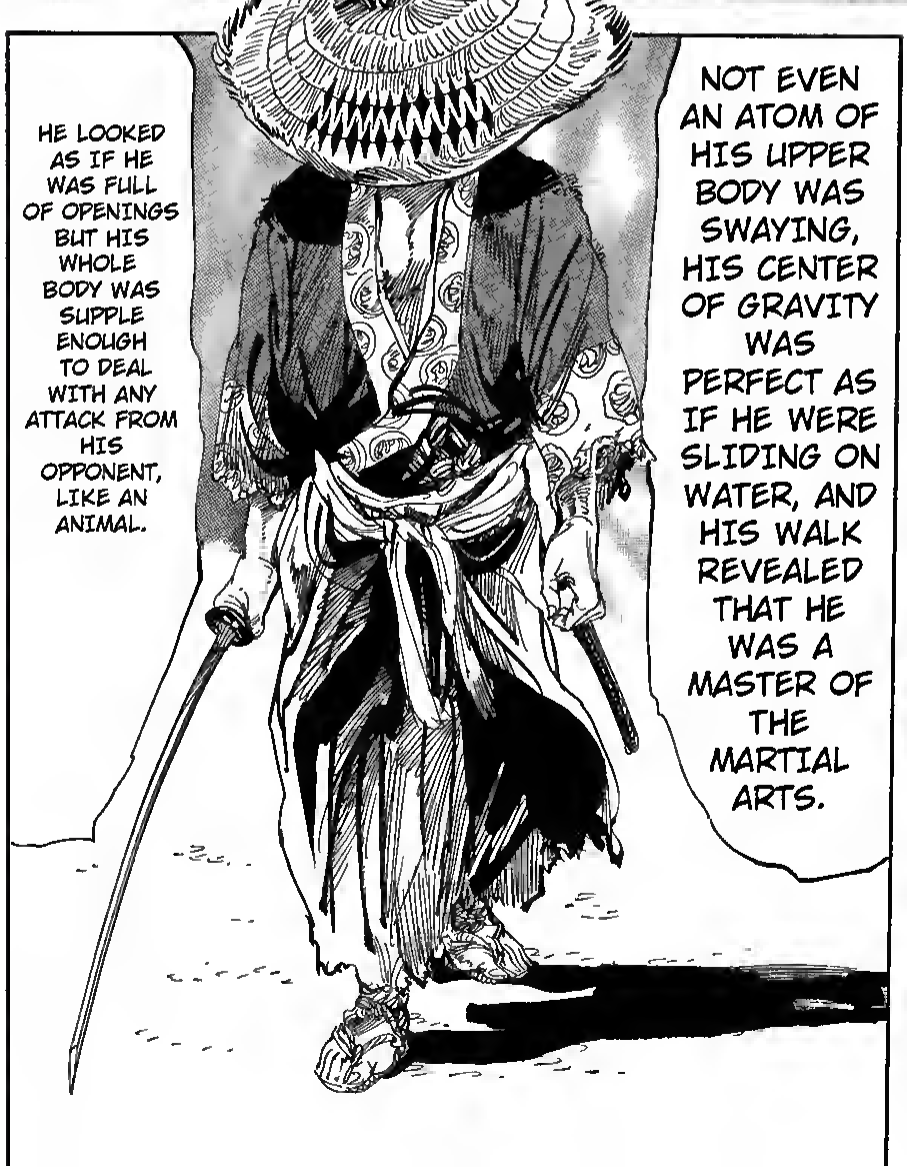
【第五話】鬼哭の剣士

BACK-FRONT, LEFT-RIGHT.
THERE ARE MANY DRAGON-FLIES ALONG THE ARAKAWA RIVER STREAM
TOSHIKANE (LATER KNOWN AS RENYASAI) SPENT THESE FEW DAYS CUTTING DOWN DRAGONFLIES. IN FACT, HE WAS CUTTING DOWN THEIR NECKS.
CUTTING DOWN THE DRAGONFLY, WHICH COMES IN AN INSTANT.
EVEN WITH HIS EYES CLOSED ...
HE DID THIS IN ORDER TO HEIGHTEN HIS SENSES.

ON HIS WAY BACK HE SAW A SAMURAI, WHO LOOKED LIKE HE HAD LOST HIS SOUL.
帰途、魂の抜けたような気配の侍に会った。
HE LOOKED LIKE A DEAD MAN.
死人のようだった。
WAIT!


ARE YOU THE MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTOR TO THE HEIR OF OWARI TOKUGAWA...
SIR TOSHIKANE YAGYU?
WHO ARE YOU?
DRAW YOUR SWORD.
FOR WHAT?

RENYA IMMEDIATELY UNDERSTOOD.
これは名流を継ぐ者の宿命だったからだ。
IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
THIS WAS THE FATE OF THE HEIR OF THE FAMOUS SWORDSMAN STYLE.
I DON'T NEED A REASON FOR WANTING TO DEFEAT A GREAT INSTRUCTOR. IF I MANAGE TO KILL YOU, MY NAME WILL BE FAMOUS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY!

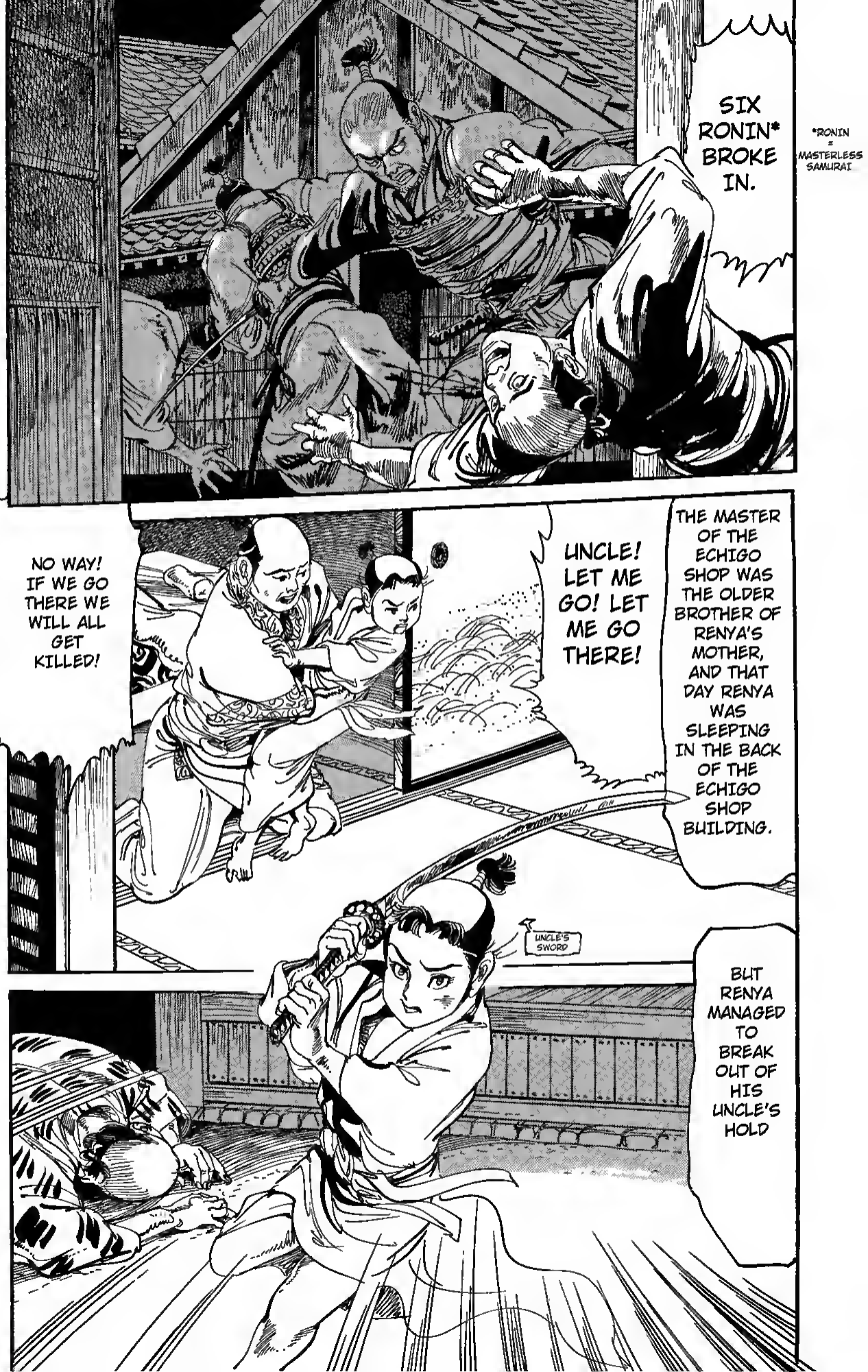

HE LOOKED AS IF HE WAS FULL OF OPENINGS BUT HIS WHOLE BODY WAS SUPPLE ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH ANY ATTACK FROM HIS OPPONENT, LIKE AN ANIMAL.
NOT EVEN AN ATOM OF HIS UPPER BODY WAS SWAYING, HIS CENTER OF GRAVITY WAS PERFECT AS IF HE WERE SLIDING ON WATER, AND HIS WALK REVEALED THAT HE WAS A MASTER OF THE MARTIAL ARTS.

連也はハッと息をのんだ。
RENYA CAUGHT HIS BREATH.

AS HIS OPPONENT DREW CLOSER, RENYA
CLEARLY COMPRE-HENDED HIS OWN DEATH.
RENYA TOOK THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE "ADVANCING WHILE AIMING FOR THE EYE" STANCE, HIDING HIS BODY BEHIND THE HILT.
I CAN ONLY HOPE FOR A DRAW WHEN FIGHTING SUCH A SKILLED OPPONENT.
IN THE MEANTIME THE SAMURAI ENTERED WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE.
HARGH!
CHING!

FWOOOSH!!
ヒュン!
IF YOU KNOW THAT, YOU REALLY ARE SKILLED.
NO, YOU WOULD HAVE CUT THROUGH MY ROBE JUST BEFORE THAT.
HAD I NOT STOPPED, MY HEAD WOULD BE FLYING.

I SENSED NO INTENT TO KILL. WHO ARE YOU?
IT'S ME.
ONE NIGHT 12 YEARS AGO IN THE OWARI FIEF'S ECHIGO SHOP'S TREASURE HOUSES,
IT'S YOU ...
MASTER JUBEI ...
?!


SIX RONIN* BROKE IN.
*RONIN = MASTERLESS SAMURAI
NO WAY! IF WE GO THERE WE WILL ALL GET KILLED!
UNCLE! LET ME GO! LET ME GO THERE!
THE MASTER OF THE ECHIGO SHOP WAS THE OLDER BROTHER OF RENYA'S MOTHER, AND THAT DAY RENYA WAS SLEEPING IN THE BACK OF THE ECHIGO SHOP BUILDING.
UNCLE'S SWORD
BUT RENYA MANAGED TO BREAK OUT OF HIS UNCLE'S HOLD

HE THEN GOT ON THE THIEF'S HORSE AND WENT AFTER THE OTHERS.
AS THE THIEVES TRIED TO ESCAPE, HE SLASHED THE THIGH OF ONE AND THEN STABBED HIM IN THE WAIST.
A LONE SAMURAI STOOD IN FRONT OF THE FOUR THIEVES' HORSES AND THEY ALL STOPPED RIGHT AWAY.
NEIGH!!
YOU DAMN THIEVES !
WAIT !!

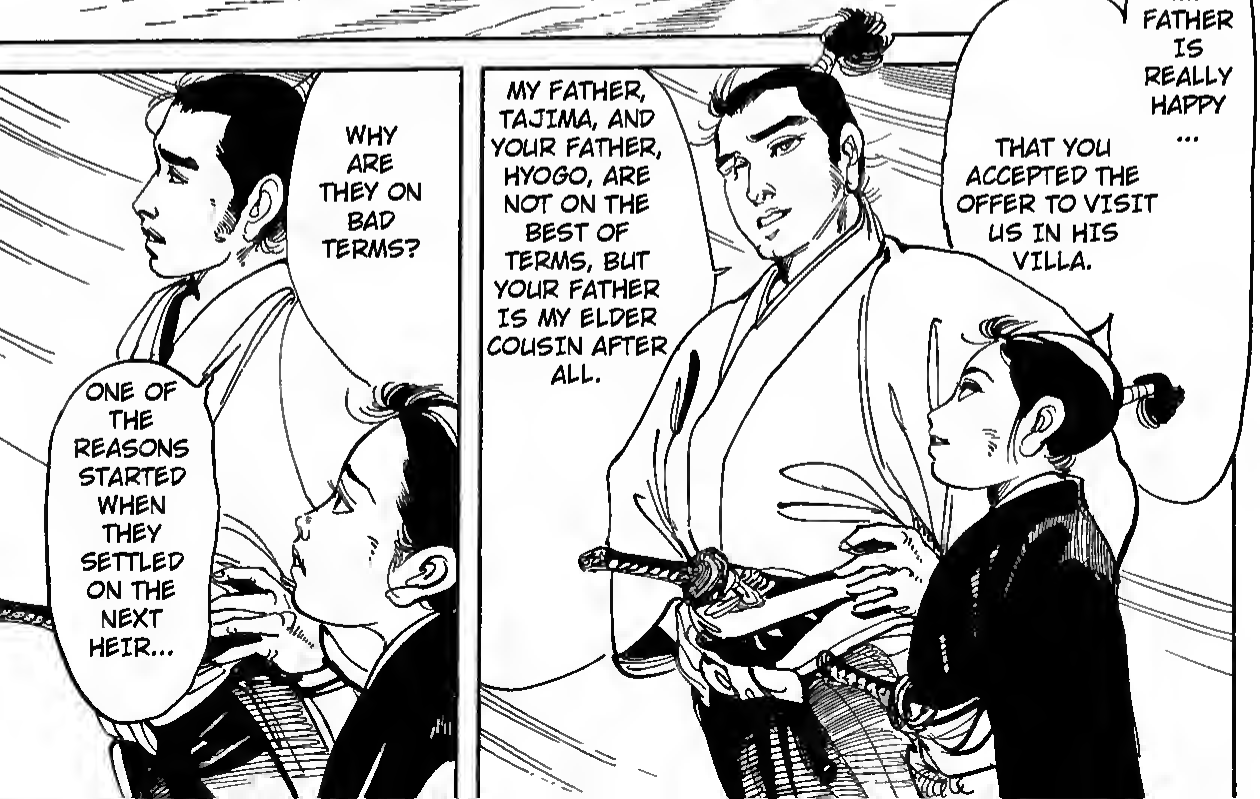
YOU, FOOL, GET OUT OF THE WAY!
IF YOU DON'T DO IT, I'LL CUT YOU ALL DOWN!
YOU LOOK SUSPI-CIOUS! GET OFF YOUR HORSES RIGHT AWAY!
ONE BY ONE THE BODIES FELL OFF THE HORSES.
HE ENTERED AMONG THEM AND WHIRLED HIS SWORD AROUND LIKE A HURRI-CANE.

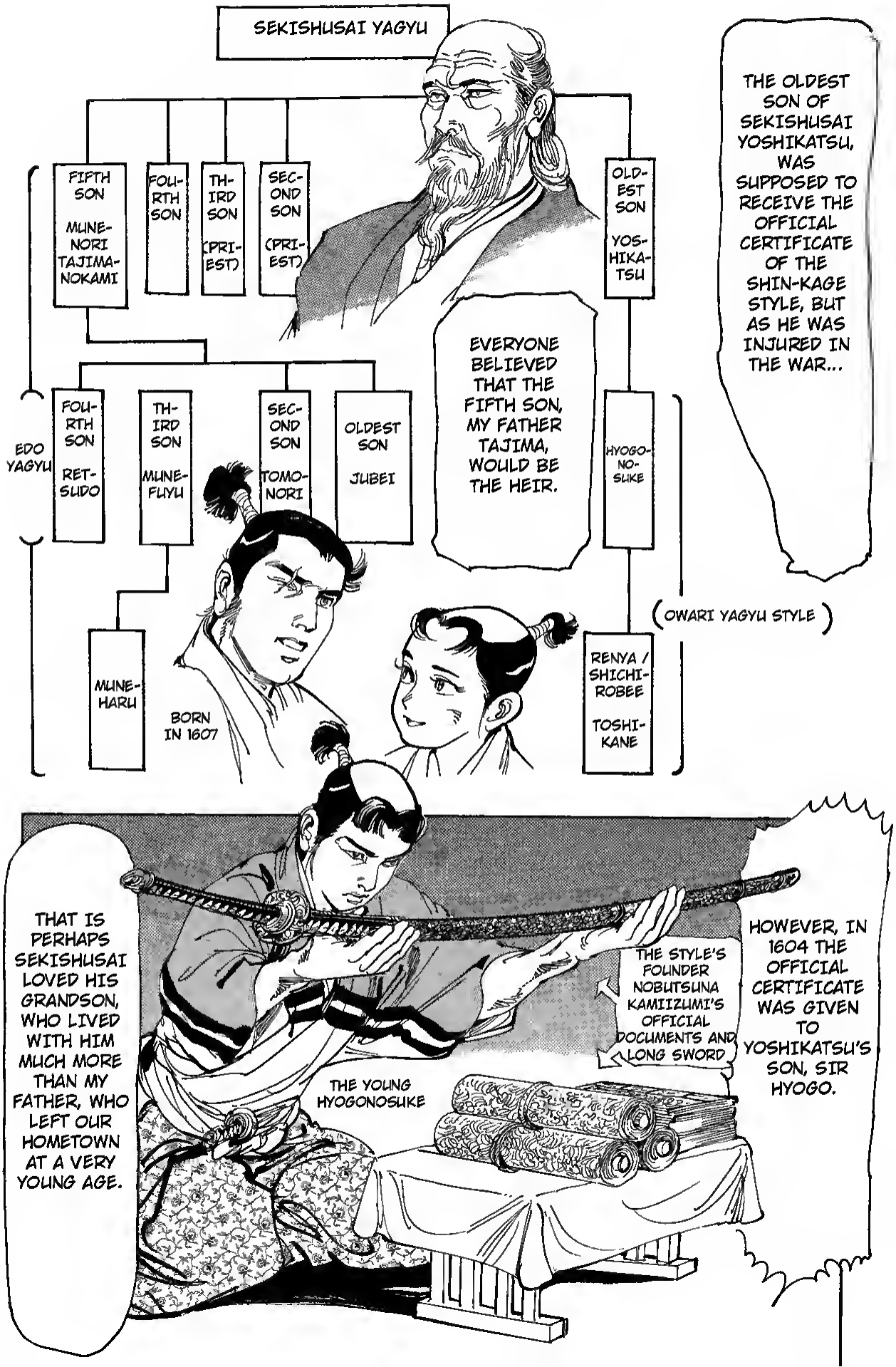
YOU DON'T DESERVE TO BE SAMURAI ANYMORE.
HITTING THE TOWN FOLK BECA-USE YOU ARE POOR,
ALL OF THEM WERE MISSING THE THUMB ON THEIR RIGHT HAND.
YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO USE THE PLOW AND HOE WITH YOUR REMAINING FINGERS!
NOW GET OUT OF MY SIGHT!
FALTERING IN FRONT OF GUYS LIKE THESE WOULD SHOW DISRESPECT TO MY FORE-FATHERS.
I AM A SON OF THE YAGYU CLAN, FAMOUS FOR THE SWORD.
DID YOU THINK THAT YOU COULD CHASE THEM DOWN AND DEFEAT THEM ALL BY YOURSELF?

ARE YOU PROUD OF BEING A YAGYU?
MY GREAT GRANDFATHER WAS TAUGHT AND MADE TO FOLLOW THE PATHS OF BRAVERY, CHARITY BENEVOLENCE, WISDOM AND GOODNESS BY THE SWORD MASTER NOBUTSUMA KAMIIZUMI.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
I'M SHICHI-ROBEI YAGYU.
WHAT IS YOUR NAME, ...?
I'M JYUBEI YAGYU.
RIGHT! EXACTLY! LIVE YOUR WHOLE LIFE WITH THESE PRINCIPLES IN YOUR HEART!
...!?

MASTER JUBEI HAS BEEN A GENIUS SWORD-SMAN RESPE-CTED BY EVERY-ONE SINCE A VERY YOUNG AGE.
YOU SHOULD LEARN FROM HIM AS MUCH AS YOU CAN WHILE HE IS HERE.
GOT IT!

SWISHHH....
ザーザーッ


MY FATHER IS REALLY HAPPY ...
THAT YOU ACCEPTED THE OFFER TO VISIT US IN HIS VILLA.
MY FATHER, TAJIMA, AND YOUR FATHER, HYOGO, ARE NOT ON THE BEST OF TERMS, BUT YOUR FATHER IS MY ELDER COUSIN AFTER ALL.
WHY ARE THEY ON BAD TERMS?
ONE OF THE REASONS STARTED WHEN THEY SETTLED ON THE NEXT HEIR...


SEKISHUSAI YAGYU
FIFTH SON MUNENORI TAJIMANOKAMI
FOURTH SON
THIRD SON (PRIEST)
SECOND SON (PRIEST)
OLDEST SON YOSHIKATSU
THE OLDEST SON OF SEKISHUSAI YOSHIKATSU, WAS SUPPOSED TO RECEIVE THE OFFICIAL CERTIFICATE OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE, BUT AS HE WAS INJURED IN THE WAR...
EVERYONE BELIEVED THAT THE FIFTH SON, MY FATHER TAJIMA, WOULD BE THE HEIR.
EDO YAGYU
FOURTH SON RETSUDO
THIRD SON MUNEFUYU
SECOND SON TOMONORI
OLDEST SON JUBEI
HYOGONOSUKE
(OWARI YAGYU STYLE)
MUNEHARU
BORN IN 1607
RENYA / SHICHIROBEE TOSHIKANE
THAT IS PERHAPS SEKISHUSAI LOVED HIS GRANDSON, WHO LIVED WITH HIM MUCH MORE THAN MY FATHER, WHO LEFT OUR HOMETOWN AT A VERY YOUNG AGE.
THE STYLE'S FOUNDER NOBUTSUNA KAMIIZUMI'S OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND LONG SWORD
THE YOUNG HYOGONOSUKE
HOWEVER, IN 1604 THE OFFICIAL CERTIFICATE WAS GIVEN TO YOSHIKATSU'S SON, SIR HYOGO.

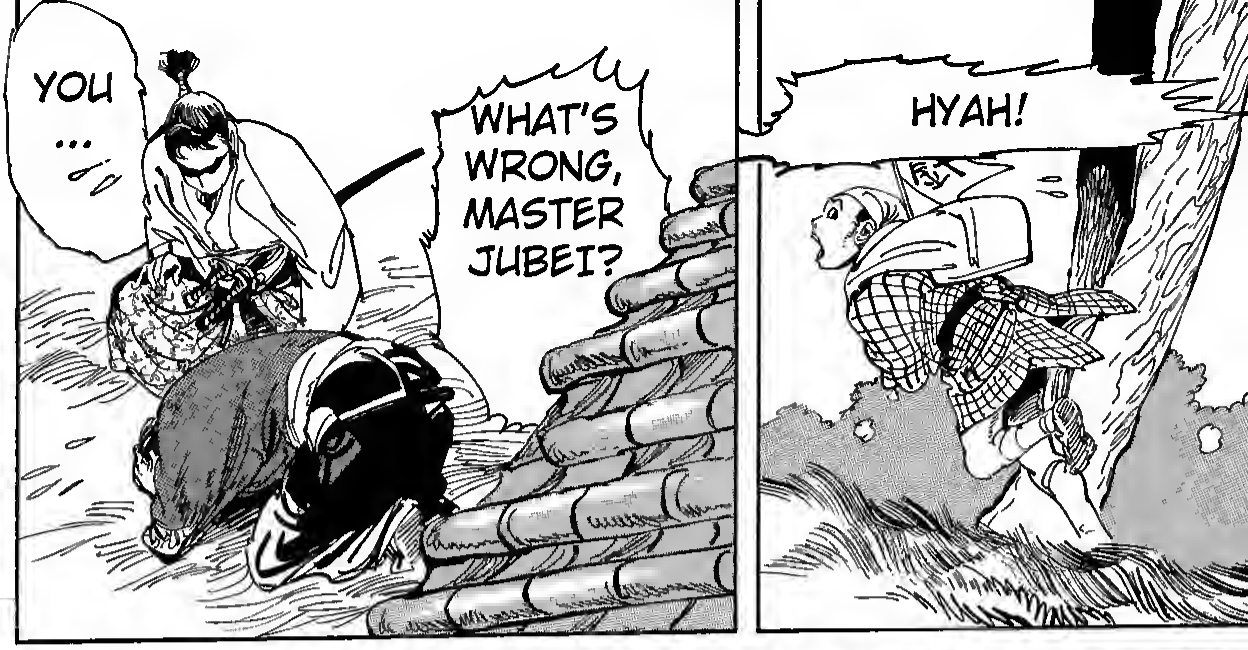
AT THAT TIME, MY FATHER, WHO WAS THE SHOGUN'S FAMILY'S SWORD TEACHER, SIGNIFICANTLY LOST HIS HONOR.
PERHAPS
YOUR NEPHEW IS BETTER THAN YOU, SIR TAJIMA.
INSTEAD, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THAT, SIR TAJIMA TOOK BACK THE YAGYU LAND THAT TOYOTOMI HAD ASSIGNED TO THE FEUDAL LORD, WITH THE HELP OF THE TOKUGAWA.
THE NAME OF THE LORD HAD THUS BECOME THE NAME OF MY FATHER,
BUT FOR SIR HYOGO, HE THOUGH THAT HIS HOMETOWN WAS BEING TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM BY HIS UNCLE .....
THAT'S A SAD SITUATION INDEED.
IT OFTEN HAPPENS WITH BIG AND FAMOUS CLANS.
THAT WAS REALLY AN ACHIEVEMENT OF MY FATHER.

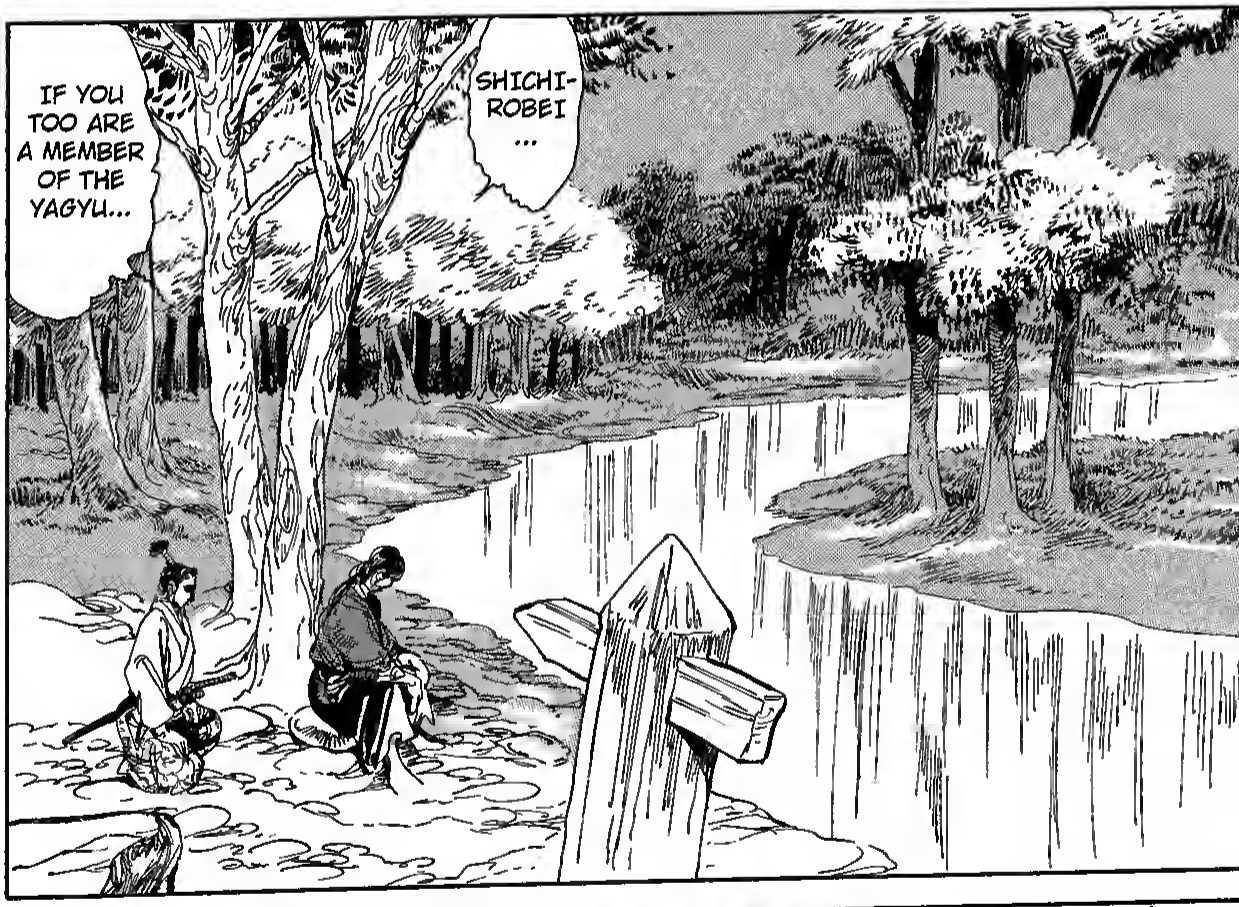
PAT!
BUT EVEN IF OUR FATHERS WERE NOT ON GOOD TERMS, SHICHIROBEI, THIS SHOULDN'T AFFECT OUR RELATIONSHIP!
YOU ARE SEKISHUSAI'S GREAT-GRANDSON! I AM HIS GRANDSON!
LET'S BOTH SEEK A VIRTUOUS LIFE AS YAGYU MASTERS OF THE SWORD!
YEP!
AND THEN YOU, MASTER JUBEI, STAYED AT MY FATHER'S VILLA FOR FIVE DAYS.
THOSE FEW DAYS WERE REALLY PEACEFUL FOR ME ...
YOU TRAINED ME, MASTER JUBEI.
YOU HAD A NATURAL ABILITY.
I HAVE ALWAYS TRIED TO BE LIKE YOU, MASTER JUBEI.
YOU MUST STILL BE AROUND 20, RIGHT?
I WONDER HOW GOOD YOU WILL BECOME IN A FEW YEARS.

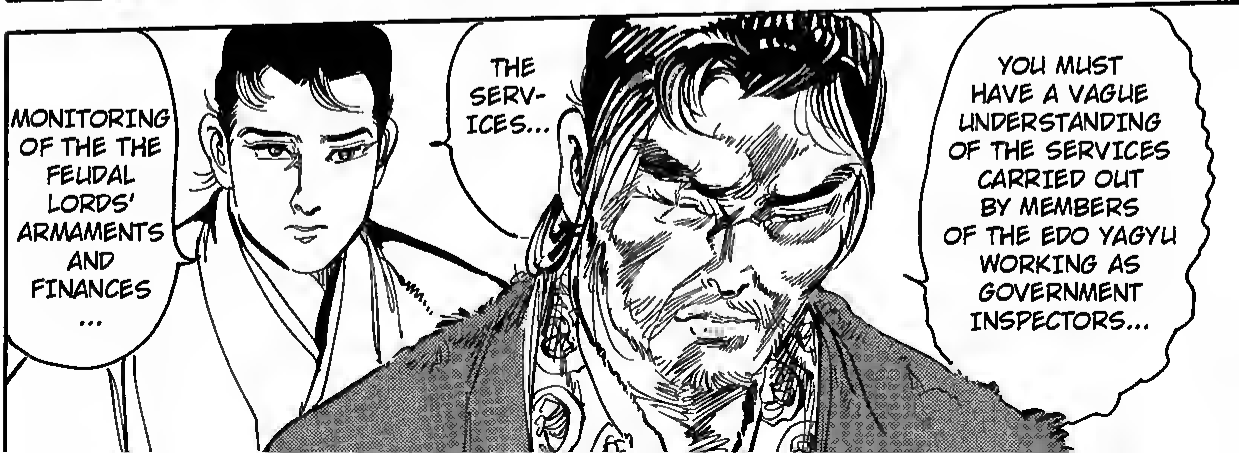
THE REASON I CAME TO EDO WAS BECAUSE I WANTED TO SEE YOUR SWORD SKILLS
...
ONLY FOR THAT
...
...
SHIP!
DO YOU WANT TO SAY THAT I AM LIVING IN A MISERABLE STATE AND THAT MY EYESIGHT IS FADING?
...
WHAT'S WRONG, MASTER JUBEI?
SHICHI-ROBEI
...
I HAVE JUST KILLED TOO MANY PEOPLE
...
I'M A STRAY DOG
...
WHERE ARE YOU LIVING THESE DAYS?
BUT WHY WOULD THE SUCCESSOR OF THE YAGYU CLAN WHICH IS EMPLOYED AS THE SWORD INSTRUCTER FOR THE SHOGUN AND HAS A HUGE STIPEND OF 12,000 KOKU SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

I HAVE KILLED MANY PEOPLE, TOO.
HAHA,
IT'S ONE THING TO KILL HERETICS.
I HAVE BEEN KILLING ALL LEADING FIGURES AND COMRADES.
HEY, CAN I ASK YOU A QUES-TION?
WHAT'S THE WAY TO SENJU?
SIGN CARRIED: NEEDLES
I'M SO BITTER!
MASTER JUBEI!

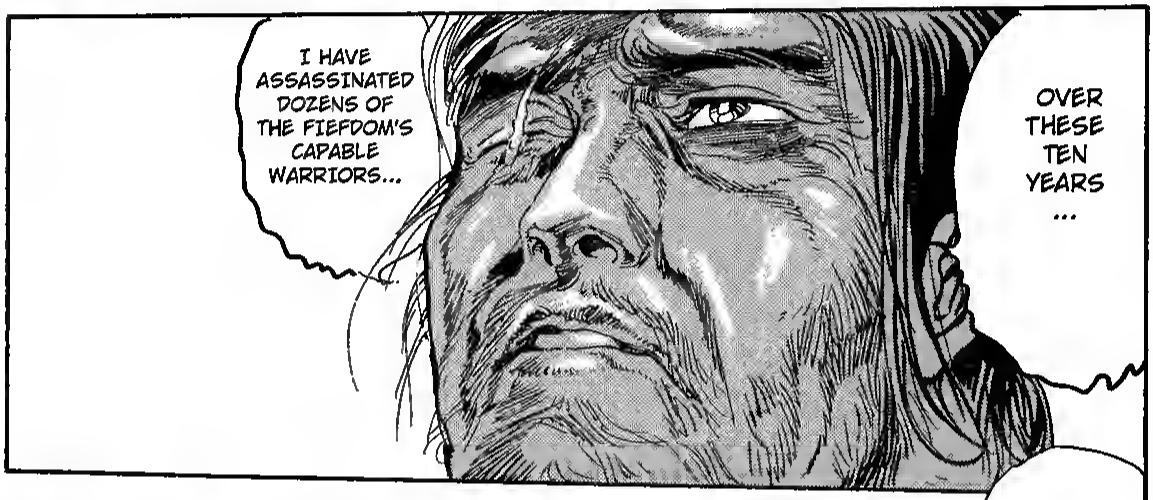
GRAB!
DON'T DO IT, MASTER JUBEI!
YOU, GHOST! HAVE YOU COME TO HAUNT ME AGAIN?
HAH!
AAAH!
HE IS JUST A NEEDLE MERCHANT! JUST A NEEDLE MERCHANT!
PLEASE COME TO YOUR SENSES, MASTER JUBEI!


YOU ...
WHAT'S WRONG, MASTER JUBEI?
HYAH!


IF YOU TOO ARE A MEMBER OF THE YAGYU...
SHICHI-ROBEI ...


MONITORING OF THE THE FEUDAL LORDS' ARMAMENTS AND FINANCES ...
THE SERV-ICES...
YOU MUST HAVE A VAGUE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SERVICES CARRIED OUT BY MEMBERS OF THE EDO YAGYU WORKING AS GOVERNMENT INSPECTORS...

HA HA, THE TRUTH IS, I USED SOME CUNNING TRICKS TO ERASE THE FACTS AND TURN CERTAIN PEOPLE POOR ...
THE ACCOMP-LISHMENT OF THAT IS THE OTHER FACE OF THE YAGYU. THAT'S MY REAL JOB ...
...


OVER THESE TEN YEARS ...
I HAVE ASSASSINATED DOZENS OF THE FIEFDOM'S CAPABLE WARRIORS...

ON TOP OF THAT, I BURIED AN IGA NINJA, WHO WAS WORKING AS A SPY FOR THE YAGYU, IN ORDER TO CONCEAL EVIDENCE ...
THE EDO YAGYU "LIFE SAVING SWORD" IS JUST A FRONT...
IN REALITY IT IS ACTUALLY AN EVIL MURDERING SWORD.
THAT'S RIGHT.

YOU AGAIN!
GIVE ME BACK MY FACE!
I RISKED MY LIFE FOR YOU, BUT YOU BETRAYED ME. YOU HERETIC! TRAITOR!
FWOOSH!
YOU CAME AGAIN!
HRNN!

KRRRR....
ギギッ
"TREMBLE"
MASTER JUBEI!
JU-!

AAARGH!! SHICHI-ROBEI!
UUH!
I'M CURSED!
IT'S UNBE-LIEVABLE THAT THE DEAD CAN CURSE THE LIVING!
THIS IS JUST YOUR GUILTY CONS-CIENCE
PLAYING TRICKS ON YOU CALLING THE GHOSTS OF THE PAST. NO-THING MORE!

INDEED ... MY SOUL ITSELF HAS CURSED ME ...
A PERSON LIKE ME WOULD BE BETTER OFF DEAD...
BECAUSE OF THIS IN THE LAST HALF MONTH OR SO I HAVE KILLED FOUR COMPLETE STRANGERS.
THAT'S RIGHT.
SHICHIROBEI, YOU ARE ONE OF OUR CLAN. PLEASE CUT ME DOWN NOW.
HAVING SUCH A PROFESSIONAL SWORDSMAN LIKE YOU GOING CRAZY AND KILLING PEOPLE IS TROUBLE FOR EVERYONE.

BURY MY HEAD IN THE GROUND SO THAT NO ONE CAN RECOGNIZE ME.
GOT IT.
AAA-RGH!
WHAT?
WILL YOU NOT DO IT?
NO, I DID IT.
I CERT-AINLY CUT YOU.

...
THE ONE LEFT IS MASTER YAGYU, THE RONIN SWORDSMAN.
THE JUBEI YAGYU, WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF THE DIRTY BUSINESS IS DEAD.
FROM NOW ON, PLEASE LIVE ONLY AS...
A MAN OF THE SWORD!
MY SOUL IS TOO DIRTY ...
I HAVE LOST SUCH PURE THOUGHTS ...
SMACK!

BAM!
FWACK!
IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, THEN FIGHT ME IN A FEW YEARS!
THE MAN, WHO WAS ADVISOR TO THE SHOGUN HAS BEEN TRAMPLED ON!

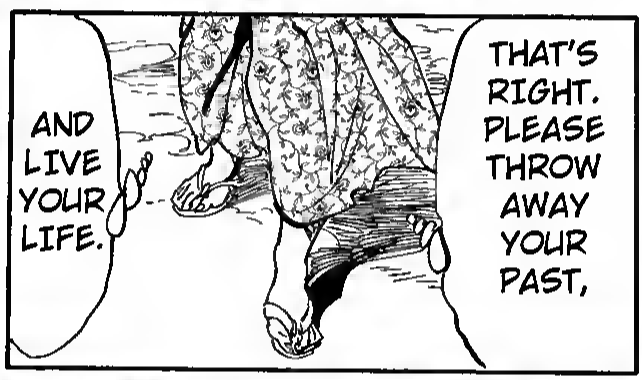
IN A FEW YEARS THIS SWORD WILL DEFINITELY CUT YOU DOWN!
IN A FEW YEARS ...?
I'LL SHOW YOU THE TRUE SPIRIT OF SHIN-KAGE!
I WILL DEFEAT YOU, JUBEI YAGYU!
IS THAT SO ...?

I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT ...
THAT SOUNDS INTER-ESTING.

WILL TRY TO LIVE A BIT LONGER ...
NOW, THE WAND-ERING RONIN JUBEI YAGYU ...

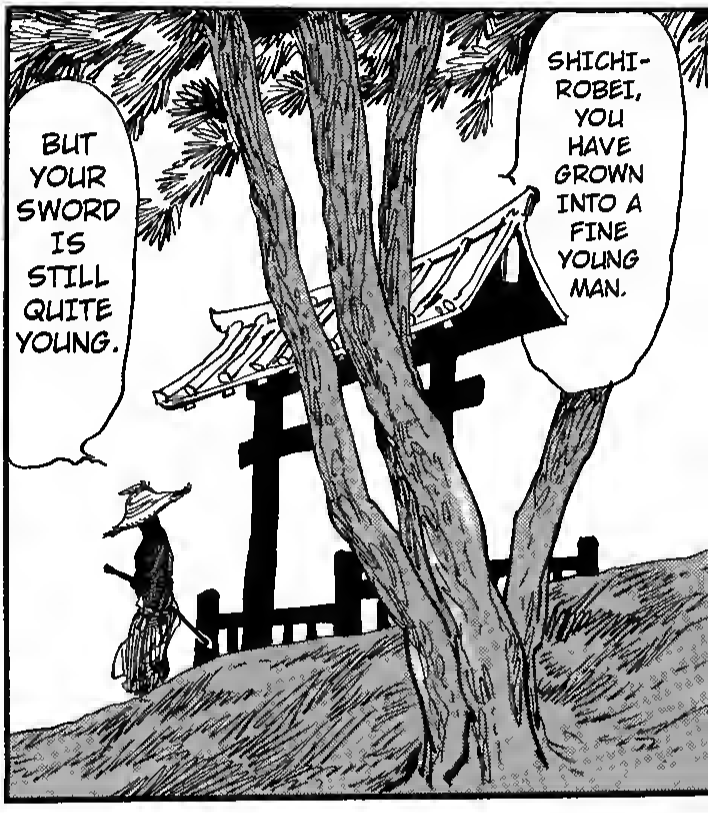
SHLIP!

I'LL BE WAIT-ING.


THAT'S RIGHT. PLEASE THROW AWAY YOUR PAST,
AND LIVE YOUR LIFE.

MASTER JUBEI.

BUT AS YOUR SKILLS WITH THE SWORD KEEP GETTING BETTER, MY FATHER'S FAMILY, WHICH PRIDES ITSELF AS THE SHOGUN'S INSTRU-CTORS, WILL HAVE TO GET RID OF YOU.



● CHAPTER 5 - FIN ●

EVER-YONE LIKED SHO-KICHI.
HE'S A REALLY SINCERE GUY.
COME BACK AND PLAY WITH US AGAIN, SHOKICHI!
AND THEN THAT SHOKICHI ONE DAY
CAME IN RUNNING WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH ...

CHAPTER 6: MOUTH WIPING

[第六話] 涎賺(よだれすかし)

CHAPTER 6:
MOUTH WIPING
[第六話]
涎賺(よだれすかし)

SIGN*
OWARI
FIEFDOM
INNER
MANSION
HELP!
LOCK
THE
GATES
!
?!
HAH-
HAH!!
CRASH!
DASH!

WHO ARE YOU? STOP!
YOU CAN'T COME IN!
GRAB!
YOU!
WHACK!

DAMN YOU!
SLAM!
THEN GO FOR IT, RETAINERS!
WAIT!
THAT MAN IS ONE OF OURS! WE WON'T LET THIS GO EASILY!

WAIT!
WHAT HAS HE DONE TO DESERVE THIS?
THIS FOOL TOUCHED HIS THIN DIRTY KNEE TO MY SWORD ON THE STREET
AND THEN JUMPED ON THE ROOF AND RAN AWAY WITHOUT APOLO-GIZING ...
AND HE GAVE ME AN INJURY TO THE FOREHEAD FROM THE FALLING TILES.
MY NAME IS HEIKURO HONDA AND I AM IMMEDIATE FOLLOWER OF THE SHOGUN!

I WOULD LIKE TO DEEPLY APOLOGIZE FOR HIS ACTIONS AS HIS SUPERIOR.
I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU ARE ANGRY ABOUT THAT ...
MURMUR...
IMMEDIATE FOLLOWER OF THE SHOGUN ...
SSHHH...
?
SO WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH HIM?
HAH!
YOU CAN'T SOLVE THIS JUST BY APOLOGIZING!
DRAG...
I SEE, SO YOU ARE THAT ANGRY ABOUT IT.
AND RESOLVE THIS BY CUTTING HIM DOWN!
I'LL USE MY RIGHT AS A SAMURAI

GET OUT OF HERE NOW!
I'LL LET YOU CUT ME UP INSTEAD OF HIM.
RUSTLE RUSTLE
YOU MEAN THAT YOU WILL PAY FOR WHAT HE DID INSTEAD?
I'M HIS SUPERIOR, SO I AM ALSO RESPON-SIBLE FOR HIS DEEDS.
IF THERE IS NO WAY FOR YOU TO CALM DOWN ABOUT THIS...

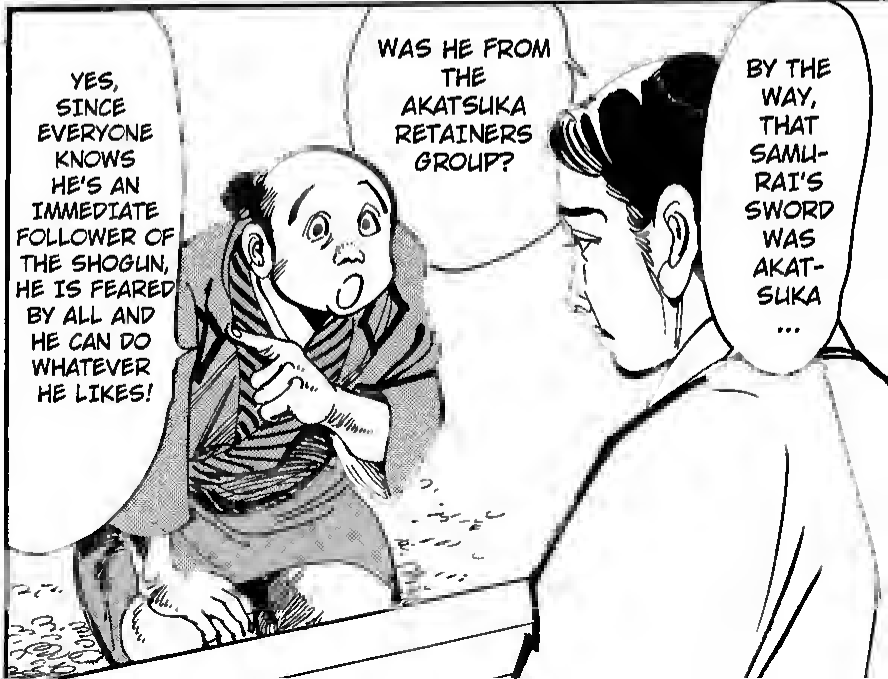
INDEED, YOU ARE MORE VALUABLE THAN HIM ...
HMM ...
...
BUT SINCE YOU ARE ALSO RESPON-SIBLE TO YOUR LORD, YOU SHOULD CONSULT WITH HIM.
I WANT TO HAVE THIS INCIDENT DEALT WITH OFFICIALLY!
I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE YOUR OFFICIAL APOLOGY FOR BREAKING INTO OUR RESIDENCE AND GETTING OUR GATE DIRTY WITH BLOOD!

I LET YOU KNOW HERE THAT YOU WILL NEED TO MAKE UP FOR THAT IN RETURN FOR MY HEAD.
GETTING THAT GATE DIRTY IS THE SAME AS THROWING MUD IN THE FACE OF LORD DAINAGON ...
THIS IS THE DAINAGON OWARI RESIDENCE.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME, KID?
I AM TOSHI-KANE YAGYU*.
HAH! SO YOU ARE THAT FAMOUS SWORDSMAN !!
I WON'T FORGET YOUR NAME, REMEMBER THAT!
AH! MASTER YAGYU ...

*TOSHIKANE YAGYU: LATER KNOWN AS RENYASAI

I CAN'T LET YOU TAKE THE PLACE OF SOME-ONE LIKE ME!
YOU COME FROM A FISHING VILLAGE, SO YOU ARE SKILLED AT FISHING AND FARMING.
PLUS, EVEN AS A SAMURAI APPRE-NTICE, YOU ARE WORKING HARD FROM DAWN TO DUSK.
PTCH!

AKATSUKA = ANOTHER IMPORTANT FAMILY


BY THE WAY, THAT SAMU-RAI'S SWORD WAS AKAT-SUKA ...
WAS HE FROM THE AKATSUKA RETAINERS GROUP?
YES, SINCE EVERYONE KNOWS HE'S AN IMMEDIATE FOLLOWER OF THE SHOGUN, HE IS FEARED BY ALL AND HE CAN DO WHATEVER HE LIKES!

BUT HE WOULDN'T FORGIVE ME. THOSE GUYS ARE THE EXTORTIONIST TYPE!
IT SEEMS THAT THEY HAVE THE CITY HOODLUMS UNDER THEIR CONTROL, AS WELL ...
YES, 300 OF THEM!
THEY MUST HAVE REMEMBERED YOUR FACE. YOU'D BETTER NOT LEAVE HERE FOR NOW...
GOT IT!
HEIKURO!
YOU MUST BE REALLY PISSED OFF BECAUSE OF WHAT THAT YOUNG SWORDSMAN TEACHER DID!
I UNDERSTAND VERY WELL!
HMM.

I SHARE YOUR FRUSTRATION.
WE ARE THREE AKATSUKA BROTHERS, WHO SWORE AN OATH THAT WE WOULD BE TOGETHER EVEN IN OUR DYING HOUR!

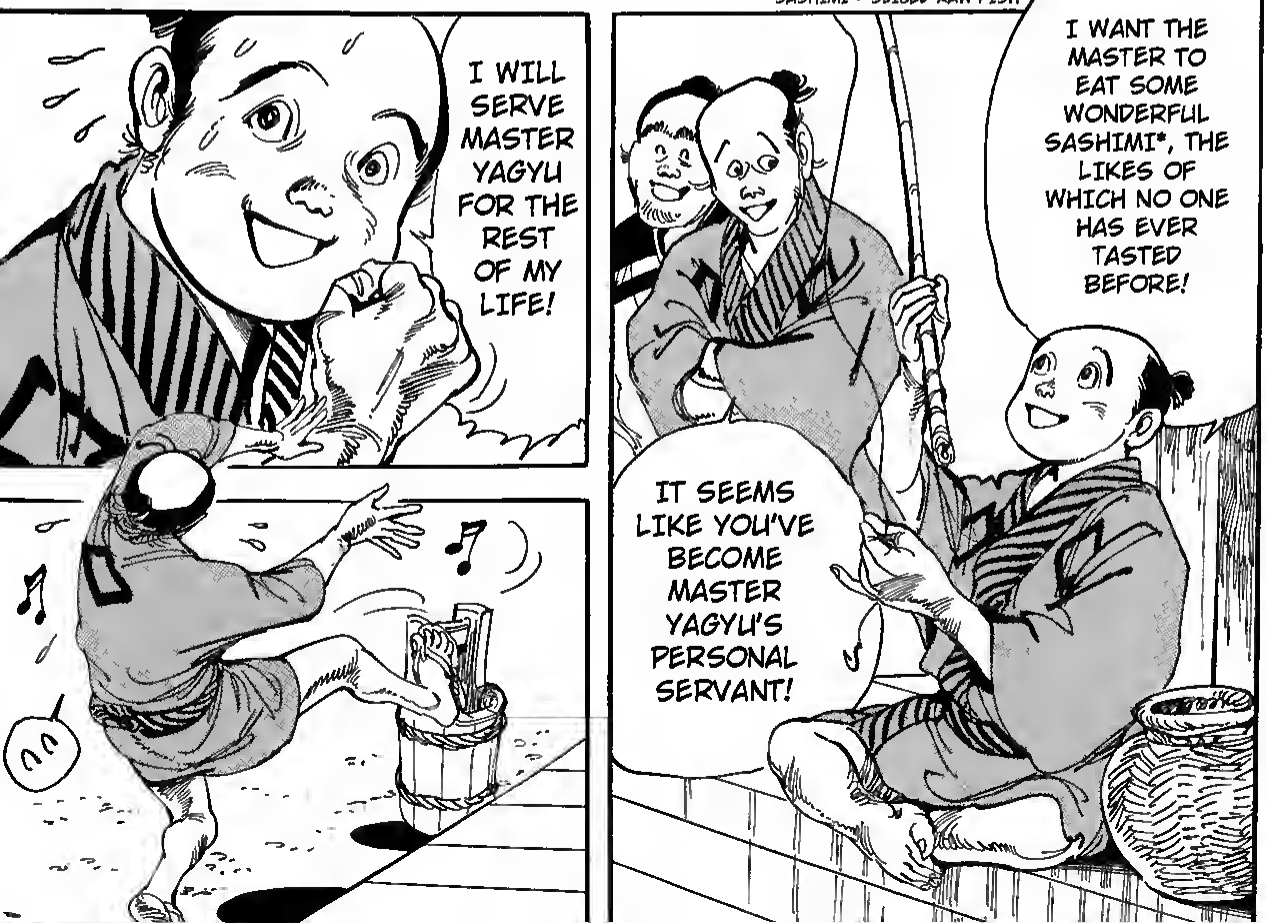
THE VARIOUS CLAN'S SAMURAI, AS SEEN FROM THE EYES OF THE SHOGUN'S CLOSE RETAINERS, WERE NOT DIRECTLY CONNECTED TO THE AUTHORITIES, SO FOR THEM EVEN THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF DAIMYO RETAINERS WERE NOTHING MORE THAN PEOPLE OF LIGHT STATUS.

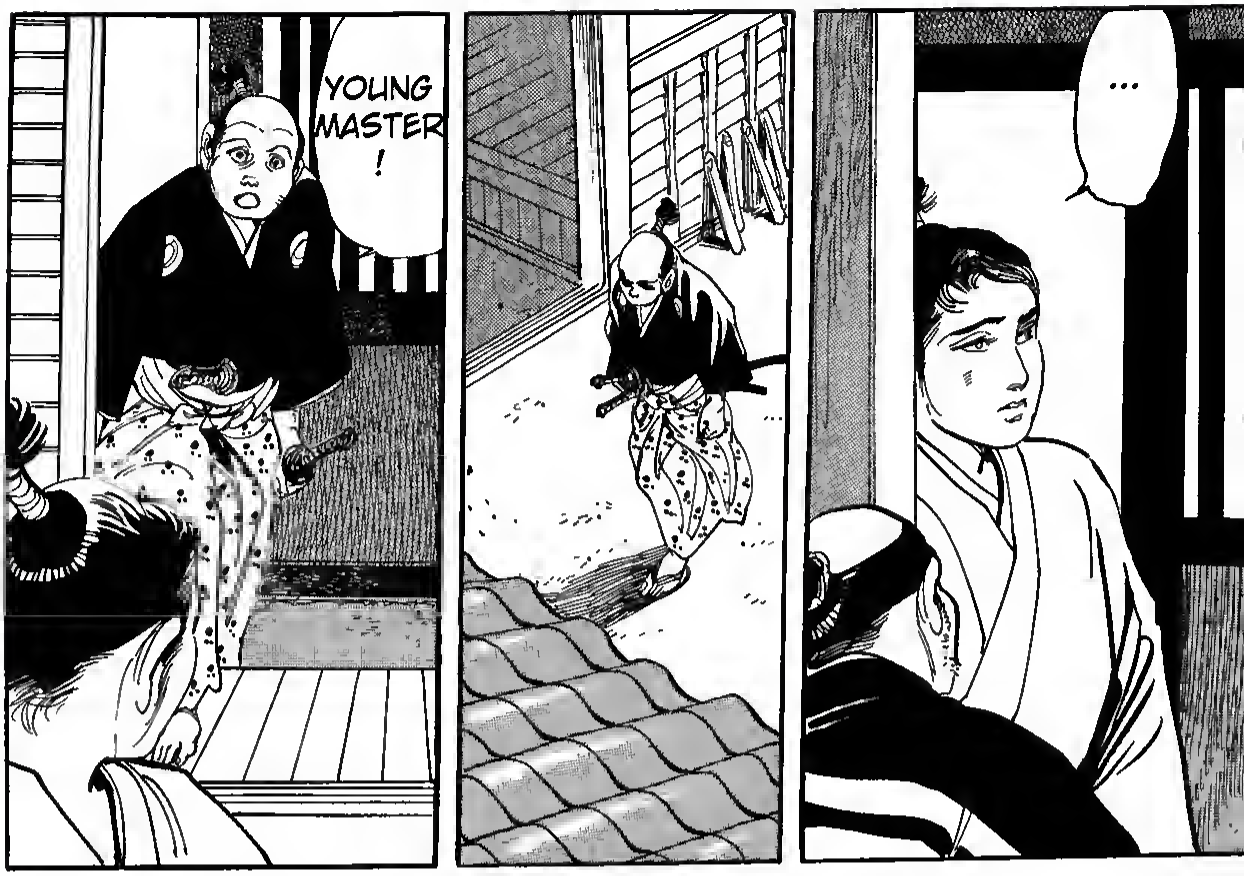
GWIK!
BUT YOU STILL HAVEN'T PAID US FOR THE PREVIOUS TIME AND THE ONE BEFORE THAT!
WE WILL PAY YOU EVENTUALLY !
SHRIEK

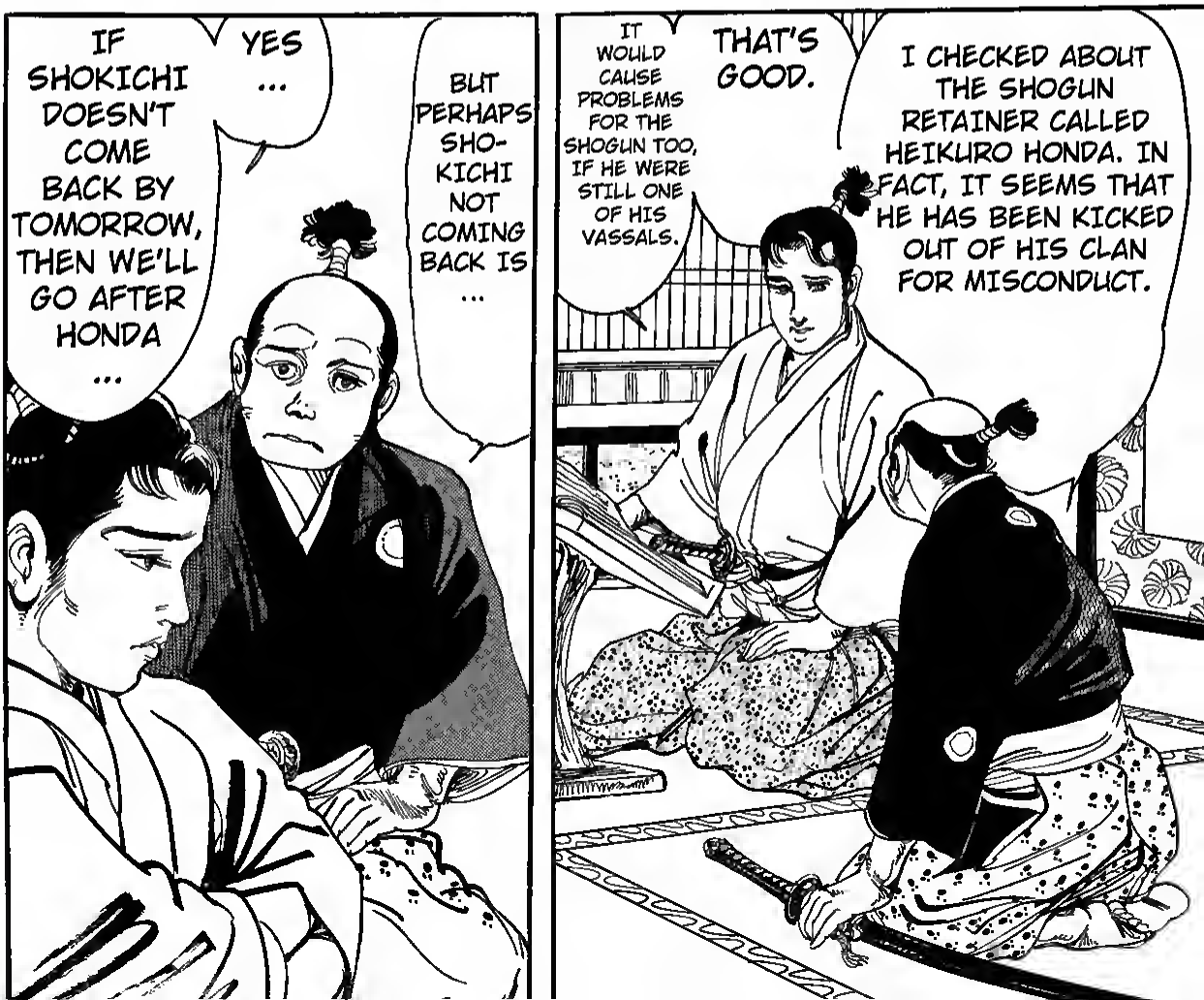
PTOO!
IF YOU DON'T SHOW US SOME MANNERS, WHO KNOWS WHAT OUR SUBORD-INATES WILL DO TO YOU?
THIS PLACE IS STILL IN BUSINESS ONLY BECAUSE WE KEEP COMING HERE!

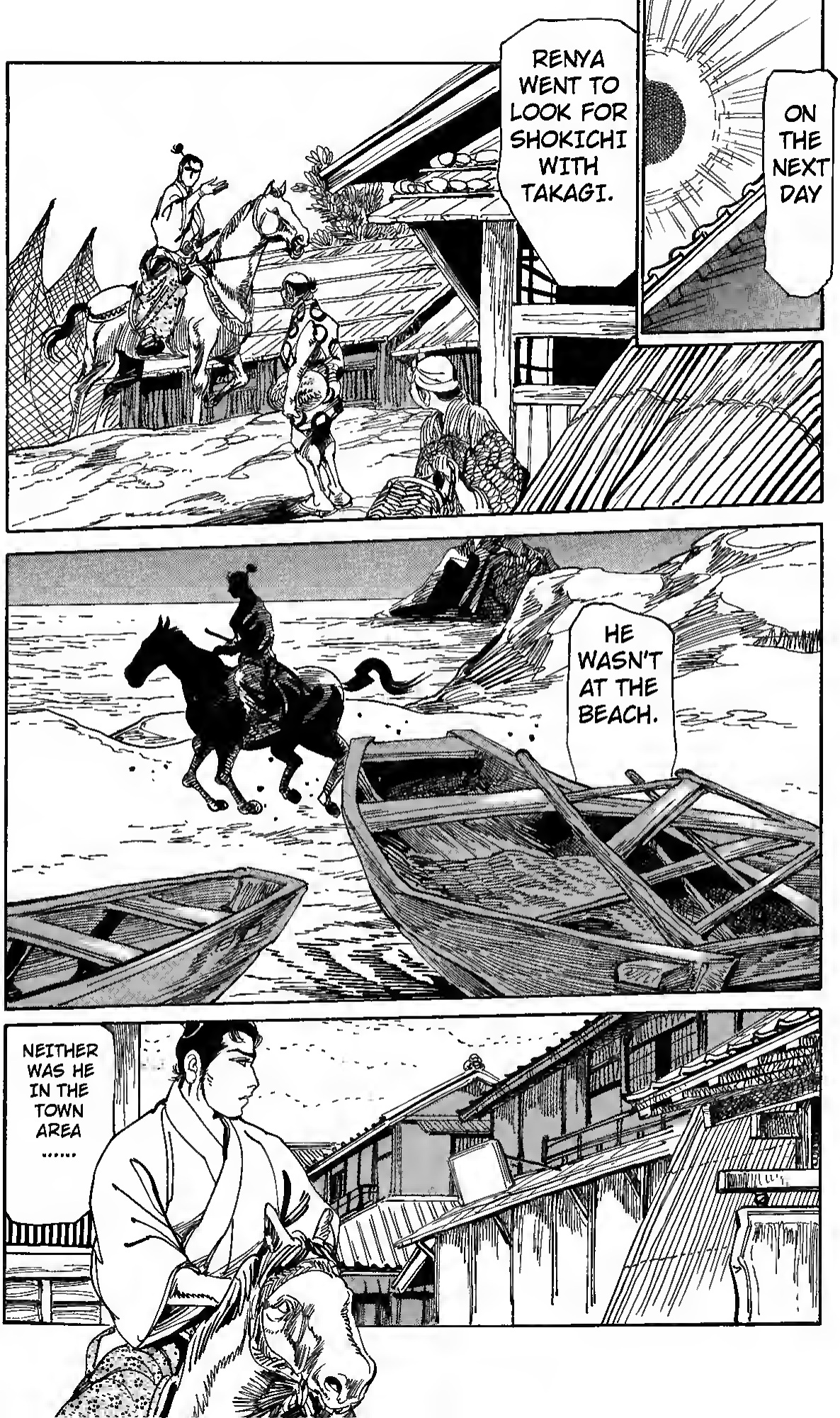
10 DAYS LATER, SHOKICHI DISAP-PEARED.
BUT I TOLD HIM NOT TO GO OUT ...
FISH-ING?
WELL ...
HE SAID THAT HE WANTED TO GO FISHING IN THE SHINA-GAWA PORT LAST NIGHT ...

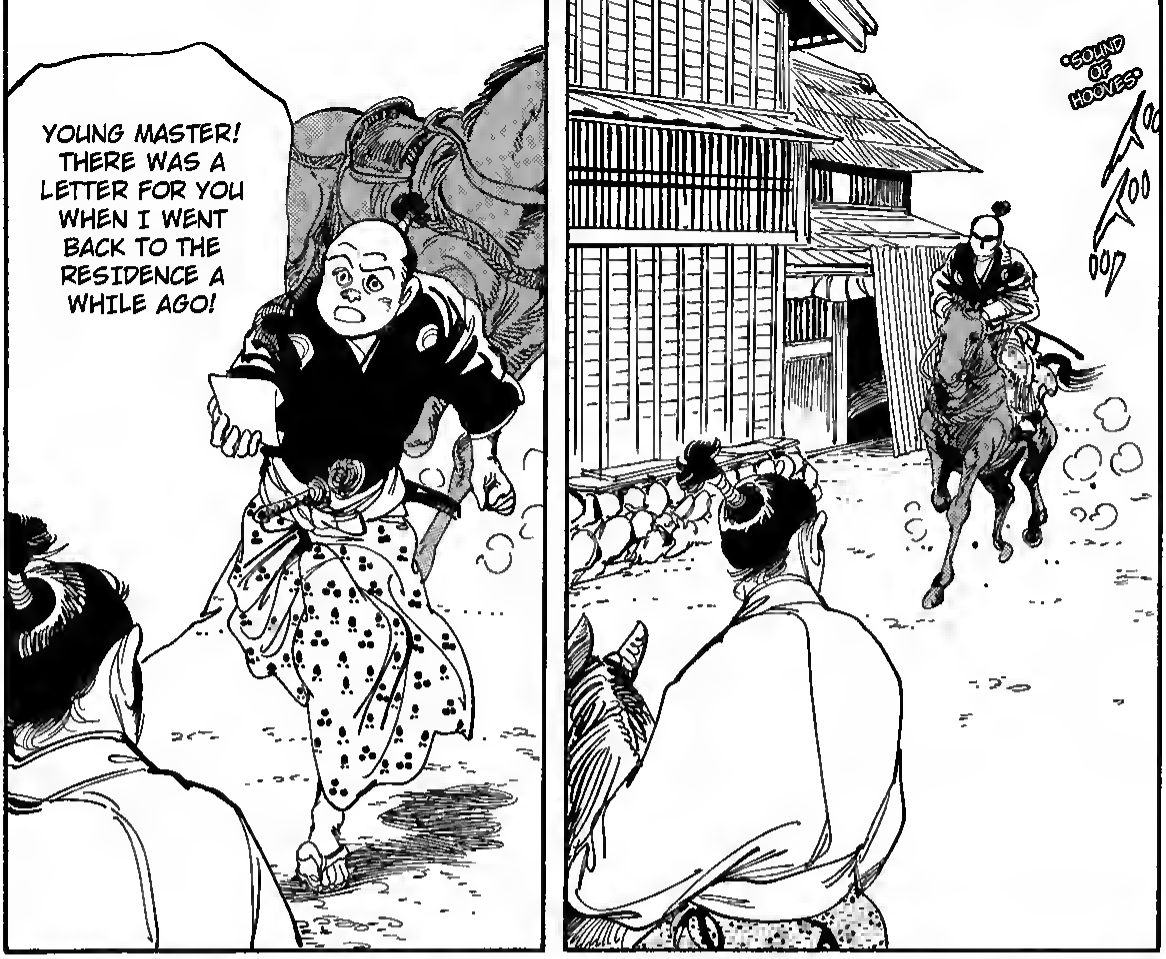
*SASHIMI = SLICED RAW FISH


I WANT THE MASTER TO EAT SOME WONDERFUL SASHIMI*, THE LIKES OF WHICH NO ONE HAS EVER TASTED BEFORE!
IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'VE BECOME MASTER YAGYU'S PERSONAL SERVANT!
I WILL SERVE MASTER YAGYU FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!


YOUNG MASTER !
...


IF SHOKICHI DOESN'T COME BACK BY TOMORROW, THEN WE'LL GO AFTER HONDA ...
YES ...
BUT PERHAPS SHO-KICHI NOT COMING BACK IS ...
IT WOULD CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR THE SHOGUN TOO, IF HE WERE STILL ONE OF HIS VASSALS.
THAT'S GOOD.
I CHECKED ABOUT THE SHOGUN RETAINER CALLED HEIKURO HONDA. IN FACT, IT SEEMS THAT HE HAS BEEN KICKED OUT OF HIS CLAN FOR MISCONDUCT.


ON THE NEXT DAY
RENYA WENT TO LOOK FOR SHOKICHI WITH TAKAGI.
HE WASN'T AT THE BEACH.
NEITHER WAS HE IN THE TOWN AREA .....


YOUNG MASTER! THERE WAS A LETTER FOR YOU WHEN I WENT BACK TO THE RESIDENCE A WHILE AGO!
SOUND OF HOOVES
IF YOU WANT TO HAVE SHOKICHI BACK, THEN COME TO GOJINGAHARA AT 5:00 IN THE AFTER-NOON.
HONDA
HYAAH!
YOUNG MASTER!
THAT MEANS IT'S A DUEL CHALLENGE LETTER!
IT'S SEALED FROM THE LEFT ...
SHO-KICHI ...

NO! I'LL BE GOING ALONE!
HE WILL SURELY NOT BE ALONE, SO I WILL BE GOING, TOO!

STANDING IN FRONT OF STRONG ENEMIES IS A TEST FOR MY SKILLS!
GENPACHI! I AM A MAN OF THE SWORD ...
YOU CAN'T KNOW HOW THEY WILL COME AT YOU!
BUT I HEAR THOSE THREE LEADERS OF THE AKATSUKA GROUP HAVE EXCELLENT MILITARY EXPLOITS FROM AMAKUSA! THEY ARE ALL MASTERS OF THE SWORD IN REAL BATTLE SITUATIONS!

ALSO, I DON'T THINK THAT I CAN LIVE LONG AND I DON'T WISH TO. IF YOU ARE SO DESPERATE TO STAY ALIVE, YOU WILL LOSE YOUR CALM.
LIVING IN THAT PAPER-THIN SPACE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH IS THE ESSENCE OF SWORD FIGHTING...

"SOUND OF HOOVES"
ドドド!
...
ブヒヒーン
NEIGH!
OK, GENPACHI! NOW GO BACK!
ガロー
WHOOOOSH!
WHOOO.....
ビュウー

HEY KID, YOU CAME ALONE!

YOU CAN HAVE HIM BACK!
WHERE IS SHO-KICHI?
BAM!
IF YOU HAD PAID THE MONEY AND MADE AN APOLOGY, THIS WOULD NEVER HAVE HAPPENED.

THE FOOL WAS HOLDING ONTO IT SO TIGHT UNTIL WE KILLED HIM, SO WE DECIDED TO GIVE THE FISH BACK TO YOU, TOO!!
AND THIS BLACK PORGY ?
IF I SURVIVE, IT MEANS THAT THEY WILL LOSE THEIR LIVES HERE.
SHOKICHI ... NOW YOU CAN WATCH THESE BEASTS, WHO WEAR SAMURAI CLOTHES ...

SO, WHERE DO YOU PLAN TO CUT US WITH YOUR MARTIAL ARTS SWORDS-MANSHIP?
ARGH!
WE'LL SURROUND YOU FROM ALL SIDES, CUT YOU DOWN AND BURY YOU!
THEY HAVE OPEN-INGS IN THEIR ARMOR.
THOSE PLACES ARE THE FOUR CONNECTING SPOTS OF THE FOUR LIMBS, WHERE THE ARTERIES RUN*.

*A CUT IN ONE OF THOSE FOUR SPOTS RESULTS IN HEAVY BLEEDING, WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO DEATH FROM BLOOD LOSS.

WELL! YOU BETTER APPROACH CAREFULLY!
RUSTLE!
ザザザッ
UWOOOAH!!
オオッ!!
...AND IT WENT JUST AS HE HAD PLANNED IT!
FWOOSH!!
ブン!!
RENYA BENT LOW TO THE GROUND TO WAIT FOR THE SECOND ATTACK...

THE SHINKAGE STYLE'S "METSUKE"
ズバッ
SLASH!
MOVE FIRST TO INVITE A REAL THRUST!
DO NOT WAIT FOR A FEINT WITH THE SPEAR...

CHING!
THAT'S WHY RENYA CAN STRIKE THE GAUNTLET WHILE DODGING SIDEWAYS...
SPLURT!
SLASH!
AND NOW ONLY HAS TO MOVE HIS BODY TO THE LEFT AND FLIP THE SWORD UPWARDS.
HONDA'S DRIVING CUT WITH THE SWORD
WAA-RGH!

AND THEN IMMEDIATELY STEPS IN TO STRIKE THE SIDE OF HIS OPPONENT'S HEAD.
RENYA DOD-GED THE BLOW BY MOV-ING BACK
HONDA PARRIES
HE COVERS WELL BY HOLDING HIS SWORD UP WITH HIS LEFT HAND.
BUT THE STURDY HONDA PUSHES BACK.
AND KEEPS PUSH-ING
RENYA PUSHES HONDA

AND THEN REN-YA JUST ...
SWOOSH!
DISAP-PEARS FROM IN FRONT OF HONDA'S EYES.
IN THE NEXT MOMENT HONDA FEELS A POWER-FUL HIT UNDER HIS ARMPIT.
FWOOSH!!

IT IS KNOWN AS "MOUTH WIPING" BECAUSE IT RESEMBLES A MOTHER MOVING IN TO WIPE THE SALIVA FROM A BABY'S MOUTH JUST BEFORE IT FALLS.
THE SHINKAGE STYLE'S YODARE-SUKASHI*
I WISH WE COULD EAT
THE BLACK PORGY SASHIMI TOGETHER ...

*THIS TECHNIQUE IS PASSED ONTO TETSUZAN KURODA, THE MASTER OF KOMAGAWA KAISHIN STYLE WHICH HAS DEVELOPED FROM SHINKAGE STYLE.

● CHAPTER 6 - FIN ●

SP COMICS

YAGYU RENYA, LEGEND OF THE SWORD MASTER VOLUME 1

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